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ABSTRACT

This monograph critiques the literature on organizational and educational leadership, asserting that traditional approaches are unsatisfactory in their own right and within the existing positivist-functionalist paradigm. After outlining problems in defining leadership, the paper critically examines the "trait" approach, particularly Stogdill's Investigation of 124 papers studying leaders' personality characteristics. Stogdill's findings base leadership not on traits, but on situational variables. According to this monograph, the situational approach (viewing leadership in terms of functions) did not clarify what is actually entailed in leadership. The same holds true for the authoritarian-democratic continuum and Fiedler's contingency model of leadership. The latter theory is criticized for presenting followers as ciphers without human volition. Leadership literature is faulted for avoiding basic questions of class, inequalities of power, and hierarchical control and ideology. In reality, leadership theory has stressed control and manipulation of the organizational community according to the administrator's whims. Finally, two alternative views are presented. The first stresses the importance of class, power, and human agency in educational administration. The second presents leadership as a dialectic relationship in the social construction of reality. These alternative approaches may be seen in a new emphasis on participative management in Victoria, Australia schools. Appended are 112 references, 3 readings, and an annotated bibliography of 15 references. (MLH)

A Critical Review of Leadership Concepts and Research: The Implications for Educational Administration

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Peter Watkins

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EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOLS

A Critical Review of Leadership Concepts and Research: The Implications for Educational Administration

Peter Watkins
Deakin University

Deakin University

This book forms part of the EED432 *Educational Leadership in Schools* course offered by the School of Education in Deakin University's Open Campus Program. It has been prepared by Peter Watkins for the EED432 *Educational Leadership in Schools* course team, whose members are:

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W. J. Smyth, *Reflection-in-Action*
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Further titles may be added to this list from time to time.

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Series introduction

This monograph series on educational leadership is, in a sense, well overdue. The word 'leadership', with its attendant heroic and charismatic images, is probably one of the most written about, contested and least understood in the English language. This series has, therefore, set itself a considerable task in seeking to challenge traditional functionalist conceptualisations of leadership by exposing why they have been unhelpful. By adopting a 'critical' approach to power relationships and viewing these in the historical, social and cultural context of schooling, the authors move the debate away from the 'bureaucratic' to a more 'educative' view of what leadership might mean. If schools are to experience forms of leadership more compatible with openness and reciprocity, they will need to see how teaching and learning fit within larger networks of social control.

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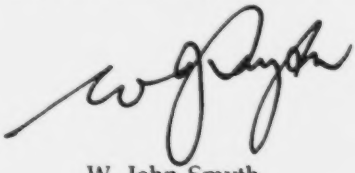

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A **critical review** of **leadership concepts** and **research:** The **implications** for **educational administration**

Overview

This monograph takes two approaches to the literature on leadership. The first part indicates that traditional approaches to the concept of leadership are unsatisfactory in their own right. It is argued that even within the positivist-functionalist paradigm there are major problems associated with the traditional views of leadership. The second part of the monograph suggests two other ways by which leadership can be viewed and structured. While there are tensions between these two views, both view administrative life as an ongoing dialectic.

Consequently, after an introduction, this monograph has the following sequence:

1 The problem of the definition of leadership is outlined.
2 There is a critical study of the 'trait' approach.
3 The 'situational' approach of the Ohio school is critically examined.
4 The research conducted on the Lewinian model of the authoritarian-democratic continuum is investigated.
5 The attempts by Fiedler and his LPC model to overcome the problems of the former models and the problems inherent in his contingency model are examined.
6 Alternatives to the preceding formulations of the leadership concept will be suggested, including why it may be desirable to look at leadership, firstly, in more basic terms such as power, and secondly, as a dialectical relationship in the social construction of reality.

Introduction

Leadership has for many years been a favourite topic of study by many administration and management scholars. Writers such as Fiedler and Chemers (1974), Sayles (1979) and Likert (1967) in business administration, and Hoy and Miskel (1978) and Sergiovanni and Carver (1980) in educational administration, have essentially taken a top-down functionalist perspective of leadership. They have examined chairmen, managers, principals or school executives in an attempt to identify the leadership characteristics that these people might have that can guide others in senior executive positions who aspire to that role. Recent criticisms of such programs claim that they clothe those in superior managerial positions in the mantle of leader while those in the subordinate positions are relegated and socialised into the roles of faithful followers (Benson 1977; Burrell & Morgan 1979).

The majority of the administration and organisational literature reinforces this ideology. As Hollander puts it:

> Usually, organizational leadership is viewed in a . . . static way. Leaders are supposed to do the job of satisfactorily managing subordinates, whose perceptions of the leader are typically given no more than minor consideration.
>
> (Hollander 1978, p. 50)

Added to this has been the sexist bias of much of the literature on leadership. A number of writers (Bormann, Pratt & Putnam 1978; Chapman & Luthans 1975; Deaux & Emswiller 1974; Putnam & Heinen 1976) have noted the male-orientated nature of traditional scholarship on organisational leadership. The successful leader has been depicted as male with traits emphasising aggressiveness, forcefulness, competitiveness and independence: characteristics that are more often associated with men than with women (see Putnam & Heinen 1976).

The advocacy of such a notion of leadership, especially when endorsed empirically, becomes an attempt to legitimate and mystify the unequal power relations which exist within many organisations. In addition, such a perspective reinforces the ideology that the subordinates within an organisation are mere ciphers or automatons devoid of any semblance of human agency (see Giddens 1979).

However, those who live, work and struggle in schools quickly recognise that such a functionalist approach is far from the reality of how schools are organised. Schools comprise people who do come to the forefront in developing and implementing new facets of school life. For example, the biology teacher of eight years' experience and low in the organisational hierarchy but doing a Masters of Education may be chairperson of the curriculum committee. As such he or she may be in the forefront of curriculum development and reform in the school. Likewise, the chemistry teacher, also low in the organisational hierarchy but an old boy of the school who is well known and respected, may organise the student's representative council and act as chairperson of the various committees liaising with the student body.

Such situations may be quite commonplace in schools. In these situations the senior administrators, while frequently being members of the committess, may find that their qualifications, interests or predelictions preclude them from being the driving force shaping the life of a school. Traditional stances in leadership take for granted the one-directional flow from the leader to the led, from the principal to the school community, without realising

the reality in which a junior member of staff may be the leader and the principal the follower. Indeed, in the recently reconstituted school councils in Victoria, which entail significant student representation in the post-primary area, it is feasible that a student may emerge as a leader in a certain area, while the principal, teachers and parents become followers.

Thus it would seem to be a futile exercise to blithely label the principal of a school as a leader, when anyone in the school community might arise in certain situations at certain times to become what might be termed 'a leader'. The problem seems to be that too often what is in reality a power relationship is obscured by the label of leadership. Indeed, the literature on leadership has aided and abetted this simplistic and naive view of the concept. As McCall and Lombardo put it:

> The accumulated data, even when pulled together, are still contradictory, ambiguous, and narrow. Improvement of our understanding of leadership apparently does not lie in pursuing existing trends or in attempting to integrate existing research. Conceptually and methodologically, leadership research has bogged down.
>
> (McCall & Lombardo 1978, p. 151)

Moreover, the habitual use of a particular organisational language extolling the virtues of leadership but excluding notions of power, class and ideology often obscures the social practices which are embodied in the activities of an organisation. The consequence is that members of the organisation come to perceive particular social practices as natural rather than being the creation of human beings. In this way, manipulative traps, deception and control mechanisms (see Gronn 1984; Leavitt 1964) which are present in organisations may be glossed over or unexamined because they are regarded by individuals as facts of life in the natural order of things. Giddens (1979, p. 144) refers to this situation as 'the *opacity* of action', by which he means that people in organisations have a low degree of penetration in understanding their actions and their involvement in the reproduction of social systems. Because of this people may be unaware of the power being exercised over them. Their acceptance of certain organisational practices as natural implies a partial acceptance of the organisational power wielders' perception of the deviant, improper, unnatural and illogical. This applies to both organisational practice and discourse.

For many writers in the field of educational administration it would appear to be improper to discuss notions of power and class in relation to educational administration. Greenfield (1983)

suggests that standard texts on educational administration like those of Hoy and Miskel (1978) or Sergiovanni and Carver (1980) give scant attention to issues such as power because of the sinister connotations which such concepts carry (see also Nyberg 1981). A discussion of power might lead organisational members to question the 'natural order of things'. The opacity surrounding inherent inequalities, the dominant-power status quo, manipulation and deception are often veiled by the nomenclature of leadership (see Gronn 1984). A questioning of these may give way to a clearer view and a greater degree of penetration of the social forms which dominate organisations (Giddens 1979, p. 72).

The absence of discussions of such basic concepts as power in the literature on administration and management must be seen in relation to the groups whose interests that literature is produced to serve. In most cases it is intended to develop a top–down perspective of organisations (see Benson 1977; Pfeffer 1981; Clegg 1981). Discussions of inequality, power and class are avoided because these concepts would call into question the very being of many organisations. As Pfeffer puts it:

> Management writing serves a variety of functions; in virtually all of these functions there is a strong component of ideology and values; topics such as power and politics are basically incompatible with the values and ideology being developed; therefore, it is reasonable, if not theoretically useful, to ignore topics which detract from the functions being served by the writing, and this includes tending to ignore or to downplay the topics of power and politics.
>
> (Pfeffer 1981, p. 10)

Thus, standard texts stress notions such as harmony, common goals and involvement through the development of 'motherhood' concepts like satisfaction and leadership which often veil the more basic underpinnings of organisations. In reality these notions are imposed on management's terms, as any complete implementation of common goals and involvement would require that the neglected issue of unequal power be addressed. For, as Perrow (1978, p. 112) indicates, organisation theory is 'shy of the word power, preferring to mystify it . . .'

If power is mystified through the use of terms like 'authority' and 'leadership', as Perrow indicates, then it would be wise to reflect on how such relationships are exercised within the modern bureaucratic organisation. In his description of the bureaucratic organisation Weber discussed how dominant groups or individuals could set up structures and procedures to enhance their knowledge and control of the organisation. Inequalities of

power are exercised under the guise of rational leadership. In such contexts an organisational elite becomes ritualised and legitimated through the employment of a rational–legal authority. According to Weber, rational administrators have immense potential for building structures of domination that can be controlled by small elites (in McNeil 1981, p. 55).

The aim of this paper is to offer a critique of a number of the approaches to leadership frequently found in organisation texts and books on educational administration. Traditional ways of viewing the principal of a school as a leader, one who exercises leadership over his followers, appear to have become less appropriate in Victoria with the changes towards a collaborative, participatory administration of schools.

In the light of such changes, the traditional view of the principal as 'the boss', as the dominating leader of the school, sits very uneasily. Moreover, the advocacy of leadership theory as an attempt to enhance managerial control and effectiveness over subordinate staff (Fiedler & Chemers 1974, p. 118) seems incongruous in the light of the current reforms in the administration of schools, in Victoria and elsewhere. It appears timely therefore to critically survey the traditional views of leadership which have held a pre-eminent position in the study of administration over the last thirty years.

The problems of definition

Over the years a plethora of papers have created confusion about the conceptual and operational definition of leadership. It is apparent in this literature that leadership means many different things to different people. Such diversity has increased the complexity of the concept to the extent that it has become virtually meaningless. Thibaut and Kelly consider that in:

> the complex aspects of leadership, there do not seem to be any properties unique to the phenomena. In virtually all cases leadership seems to be analyzable in terms of other, simpler concepts. For example, the leader often emerges as a possessor of power which enables him to initiate changes in the behavior of other persons or to introduce innovations. In other instances, the leader appears as a person who performs certain functions for the group.
>
> (Thibaut & Kelly 1961, p. 289)

Too often leadership is described in empty rhetoric. An example is Barnard (1983, p. 283) for whom leadership 'is the indispensible social essence that gives common meaning to

common purpose, that creates the incentive that makes other incentives effective, that infuses the subjective aspect of countless decisions with consistency in a changing environment, that inspires the personal conviction that produces the vital cohesiveness without which cooperation is impossible'.

Andrews has outlined the multiplicity of definitions of leadership which have been offered by various scholars:

> Leadership is the exercise of authority and the making of decisions (Dubin, 1951).
>
> Leadership is the initiation of acts which result in a consistent pattern of group interaction directed toward the solution of a mutual problem (Hemphill, 1954).
>
> . . .
>
> The leader is one who succeeds in getting others to follow him (Cowley, in Hemphill, 1954).
>
> The leader is the person who creates the most effective change in group performance (Cattell, 1953).
>
> The leader is the one who initiates and facilitates member interaction (Bales and Strodtbeck, 1951).
>
> Leadership, in group discussion, is the assumption of the tasks of initiating, organizing, clarifying, questioning, motivating, summarizing and formulating conclusions; hence, the leader is the person who spends the most time talking to the group, since he carries out more of these verbal tasks (Bass, 1949).
>
> Leadership is the process of influencing group activities toward goal setting and goal achievement (Stogdill, 1950).
>
> The leader is that person identified and accepted as such by his followers (Sanford, 1949).
>
> (Quoted in Fiedler 1967, pp. 7–8)

Fiedler, one of the more influential of recent researchers and theorists, himself defines the leader as

> *the individual in the group given the task of directing and coordinating task-relevant group activities or who, in the absence of a designated leader, carries the primary responsibility for performing these functions in the group.*
>
> (Feidler 1967, p. 8)

These definitions point out the confusion which surrounds a concept which may vary from an exercise in authority to the acceptance of someone by the group.

Nevertheless, there appear to have been several schools of thought on how to approach the leadership problem. One of the initial approaches resulted in the great-man school, which examined the personal traits of some great leader. Later the

general trend was away from the psychological 'trait' approach in favour of a more flexible approach which recognised that the qualities of the leader were basically a response to various group situations and demands. Hemphill states the point succinctly in saying that

> there are no absolute leaders, since successful leadership must always take into account the specific requirements imposed by the nature of the group which is to be led, requirements as diverse in nature and degree as are the organizations in which persons band together.
>
> (Hemphill 1949, p. 225)

Katz and Kahn (1966, p. 301) classify the various definitions of leadership into three major compartments: 'as the attribute of a position, as the characteristic of a person, and as a category of behavior'. They also point out that without followers there can be no leader. Thus the concept is a relational concept entailing two items: both the person influencing and the persons influenced. Moreover, leadership is concerned with particular members of groups who can be positively differentiated from other members of the groups by their behaviour, personal characterisitcs, perception, or group structure. Yet the concept of leadership has been forced on the one hand to account for the collective and operational differences which have been advanced under the name of leadership, and on the other hand to legitimise unequal power relationships within an organisation (Teulings 1980; Leavitt 1964). This has prompted Katz and Khan (1966, p. 301) to view leadership as a 'slippery concept'. The main problem then is that not only is the concept nebulous but it also seems to veil unequal class and power relations (Giddens 1982).

Another difficulty associated with the conceptual and definitional development of leadership in education has been the problem of the relationship between 'headship' and 'leadership'. The resultant confusion and uncertainty has been to the detriment of any slight stature the leadership concept might have had. The argument revolves around whether leadership is a function of group organisation. Gibb (1970, p. 206; original 1947), the main advocate of the leadership–headship distinction, considers that leadership is not usually an enduring role unless an organisation is built up which enables an individual to retain the role after he ceases to exert any leadership qualities. In this case, leadership becomes domination or mere headship. Gibb's criteria for distinguishing between the concepts of headship and leadership are:

> (a) the position of headship is maintained through an organized system and not by the spontaneous recognition of the individual contribution to the group goal; (b) the group goal is arbitrarily chosen by the autocratic head in his own self-interest and is not internally determined; (c) there is not really *a group* at all, since there is no sense of shared feeling or joint action; and (d) there is in this process a wide social gap between the group members and the head, who strives to maintain this social distance as an aid to his coercion of the group through fear.
>
> (Gibb 1970, p. 213)

This distinction has been criticised in several papers. For example, Cooper and McGaugh (1970, p. 249; original 1963) have pointed out two limitations. Firstly, they arque that there is a semantic problem. They claim that what Gibb chooses to call leadership could more profitably be referred to as a *type* of leadership. They point out that domination behaviour also influences the behaviour of others, even though preference for democratic behaviour leads to the dislike and prevention of domination. Secondly, they argue that because group processes are fluid and dynamic an individual may play a variety of roles and occupy different positions of status embodying differing amounts of power within a given group over a period of time. This is supported by Cattell's hypothesis (in Haythorn 1953) that every person in a group is to some extent a leader in so far as he or she has some effect upon the nature and consequent performance of a social group. Janda (1960) claims that the headship concept cannot be supported on close examination. He asks: Is leadership determined by the spontaneous recognition of the individual contribution to the group goal? With leadership is the group goal always internally determined? Is there never a wide social gap with leadership? He claims that the literature reporting on research on leadership produces a 'no' to these questions. It would seem that over the years the dispute over headship or leadership seems to have fizzled out. It adds little to the general development or clarification of leadership. It seems to be a semantic dispute of little worth. Moreover, it is noteworthy that over the last few years there has been little reference to the leadership–headship dispute. More persistent has been the 'great man' theory of the trait approach. (You will note that as yet there appears to be no 'great woman' theory!) Through this approach men who have become successful in business or organisations often create a mythology of personal characteristics to legitimate and justify their acclaim.

The trait approach

Of the major conceptual and empirical approaches to research into leadership, the initial emphasis was on distinguishing certain 'leadership traits' in the individual's personality or physical make-up. Advocates of the trait approach have spent a considerable amount of time attempting to correlate leadership behaviour and such physical and personality traits as age, height, weight, appearance, fluency of speech, intelligence, introversion-extroversion, etc. Stogdill (1970; original 1948) investigated 124 papers in an attempt to determine the validity of the traits studies of leaders. He found that the correlations, while positive, were low and that contradictory findings were common. The evidence suggested that 'leadership is a relation that exists between persons in a social situation, and that persons who are leaders in one situation may not necessarily be leaders in other situations' (Stogdill 1970, p. 126). If leadership is situationally based then traits are of little consequence.

Stogdill's findings indicated that leadership is not a matter of passive status or the mere possession of some combination of traits. Also, Janda (1960) has pointed out that the five basic factors listed by Stogdill (capacity, achievement, responsibility, participation, status) were characteristics of the leader.

It was still unclear whether leadership referred to:

1 the behaviour of this individual in interaction with other group members;
2 the behaviour of this individual as a group member – perhaps with differentiated role functions to perform;
3 the behaviour of other group members in interaction with the member designated as leader;
4 the social relationships which existed between the leader and other group members;
5 all of the above; or
6 none of the above.

Thus, while Stogdill helped to cast light on what might be the comparative fruitfulness of the trait approach, he did not clarify what is actually entailed in leadership. No unifying conceptual development was suggested. However, his basic conclusion that the 'qualities, characteristics and skills required in a leader are determined to a large extent by the demands of the situation in which he is to function as a leader' (Stogdill 1970, p. 123) led to establishment of the Ohio situationalist school as the next main development in leadership studies.

Despite the evidence that the situational context and not the traits of a person was responsible for the nature of

organisational relationships, as Gallo and McClintock (1962) and Bavelas (1970; original 1960) show the trait approach persisted after Stogdill's paper. It persisted largely because it presented a simplistic view of what people hoped leaders would be like (see Protherough 1984). However, the only direct relationship between the traditional traits and leadership appears to be negative. Thus, shyness, anxiety, etc. may reduce the prospect of someone being a leader. Research by Gallo and McClintock (1969) indicated, among other things, that past leaders perceived leadership status more accurately than those who had not been leaders and that this perception was a distinguishing trait of leaders. However, it is unclear what they mean by leadership status. As Mulder (1971) has pointed out, leadership can vary with the degree of expertness exhibited. Thus, one member of a school community may have leadership status on the curriculum, another may have leadership status in dealing with the local community, while the designated leader may have no leadership status at all in those or any matters.

Bavelas (1970, pp. 18–19) also questions the method of separating people into '"leaders" and "nonleaders" or "good leaders" and "not-so-good leaders"'. He asks: 'On what basis is the initial separation of subjects made, and how is it justified?' (p. 19). He concludes that there is no satisfactory criterion. The distinction between good leaders and others tends to be based on value judgments which are often subjective, relativistic and contradictory. There seems to be little correlation between a person's ethical and moral position and his or her ability to attract followers. Bavelas also objects to the nature of the traits themselves, which he considers to be based on personal characteristics. However, the degree to which individuals exhibit leadership depends not only on their personal characteristics but also on the characteristics of the situation in which they find themselves. Thus, when specific situational patterns are different in various organisations it is difficult to say which personal traits will lead to leadership. Bavelas (1970, p. 21) concludes: 'One must try to define the leadership functions that must be performed in those situations and regard as leadership those acts which perform them'.

Finally, it should be pointed out that, instead of people attributing certain traits to some idealised hero, organisational founders very often reconstructed history to foster the notion of a 'great man'. Myths were created by public relations men and those ideologically committed to a particular construction of social

reality. In a perceptive study of the Philips company and the family which controls it, Teulings comments that

> the 'great man' approach tends to attribute company successes to the purposeful behaviour of a clairvoyant captain of industry, and failures to the unpredictable, uncontrollable turbulences of the environment, or to the fate of time.
>
> Once in use, this myth becomes a functional prerequisite for the viability of the company as a private enterprise. The myth provides a symbolic continuity, sustains the role of family ownership and prevents the downfall of the great leader, even when he does not distinguish himself at all by acts of wisdom or foresight.
>
> (Teulings 1980, p. 153)

Thus the trait approach persists because it often presents those idealised characteristics with which people would like to typify their imagined symbolic heroes. In addition, the approach has been nurtured by business magnates to justify their own position through myths and legends that endorse their prowess. However, because the trait approach was obviously simplistic the more complex situational approach was developed as part of the human relations strategy of management (see Perrow 1979).

The situational approach

The situational approach views leadership in terms of function performed rather than in terms of particular leadership traits. This emphasis on the function of leaders dominated the literature on leadership during the 1950s. Halpin (1955, pp. 18–19) states that this was a natural result of the surveys of Gibb in 1954 and Stogdill in 1948, which indicated that leadership was a 'complex social phenomenon that cannot be treated meaningfully when conceived as an isolated trait or entity viewed apart from related group and institutional factors'.

The main work on the situational approach came from members of the Personnel Research Board at Ohio State University, especially from Hemphill, Stogdill and Shartle. The Ohio school sought to define leadership behaviour in terms of certain situational variables, such as the nature and distance of the group goal, the motivation of the group, etc. As these factors vary with the situation, leadership would also vary. Describing leader behaviour was an amalgam of the perceptions of the leader's subordinates and the way in which the leader himself perceived his own attitude toward his role. The notions of 'consideration'

and 'initiating structure' were isolated as basic dimensions of leadership behaviour in formal organisations.

Fleishman and Harris defined consideration and initiating structure as:

> *Consideration* includes behavior indicating mutual trust, respect, and a certain warmth and rapport between the supervisor and his group. This does not mean that this dimension reflects a superficial 'pat-on-the-back', 'first name calling' kind of human relations behavior. This dimension appears to emphasize a deeper concern for group members' needs and includes such behavior as allowing subordinates more participation in decision making and encouraging more two-way communication.
>
> *Structure* includes behavior in which the supervisor organizes and defines group activities and his relation to the group. Thus, he defines the role he expects each member to assume, assigns tasks, plans ahead, establishes ways of getting things done, and pushes for production. This dimension seems to emphasize overt attempts to achieve organizational goals.
>
> (Fleishman & Harris 1970, pp. 346–7; original 1962)

These two dimensions of leader behaviour were used in the Halpin and Winer (Halpin 1955) adaptation of Hemphill and Coons's original Leader Behaviour Description Questionnaire (LBDQ). Halpin used the questionnaire to attempt to measure leadership ideology and leadership style in both the US Air Force and public education. To do this involved the use of two forms. Firstly , the *LBDQ–'Real'* required group members to describe their leader's behaviour. Secondly, the *LBDQ 'Ideal'* was an instrument designed to measure the leader's own leadership ideology.

As the two dimensions 'initiating structure' and 'consideration' were found to be orthogonal in the statistical technique of factor analysis, Fleishman and Harris (1970, p. 346) have suggested that the two dimensions are independent. Thus a leader or supervisor may score high on both dimensions, low on both, or high on one and low on the other. This is an important aspect of the situationalists' argument. As Lowin, Hrapchak and Kavanagh (1969, p. 238) point out: 'It is possible to exert considerable direction on the activities of one's subordinate, yet still maintain a highly supportive relationship with him. Just this delicate fusion of a high level of consideration and a high level of initiating structure may be the key to effective supervision'. Cartwright and Zander support this when they say:

> Any given behavior in a group may have significance both for goal achievement and for maintenance. Both may be served

> simultaneously by the actions of a member, or one may be served at the expense of the other. Thus, a member who helps a group to work cooperatively on a different problem may quite inadvertently also help to develop solidarity. In another group, however, an eager member may spur the group on in such a way that frictions develop among the members, and even though the goal is achieved efficiently, the continued existence of the group is seriously endangered.
>
> (Cartwright & Zander 1960, p. 496)

This attitude is also supported by Halpin's studies of educational administrators and aircraft commanders. His view of effective leadership is characterised by high initiation of structure *and* high consideration (Halpin 1969, p. 313). However, Greenwood and McNamara's research (in Wrightsman & Deaux 1981) indicates that the relationships between consideration and initiating structure are generally low. Thus a supervisor who keeps his employees task-orientated would not be particularly considerate. This would also indicate that there is independence in regard to success in achieving the two dimensions of leadership.

An empirical paper by Lowin et al. (1969) concerned itself with the relationship between the two dimensions and their correlation with both effectiveness and morale. Three hypotheses were put forward to research the relationship:

1 Consideration and initiating structure ratings of the superior to his subordinate will be orthogonal.
2 Productivity and quality of work of subordinates (indices of organisational effectiveness) will correlate positively with consideration and initiating structure.
3 Job satisfaction of subordinate will correlate positively with consideration.

In examining 48 individual item correlations, each based on 33 judgments of consideration and initiating structure, Lowin et al. found that 22 of the 28 'consideration'-item correlations were negative, as were 17 of the 20 'initiating structure'-item correlations. Also, by the use of median tests, it was found that each of the predictions could not be supported by the data. Lowin et al. attempt to explain this by proposing that the static picture of orthogonality of consideration and initiating structure may well mask true interrelationships. These interrelationships are seen to involve participative decision making, which appears to contribute to high consideration but low initiating structure, but does not alter the power status quo within the organisation.

A similar study was conducted by Oaklander and Fleishman (1964) who examined the patterns of leadership related

to organisational stress in hospital settings. The study examined some relations between the leadership patterns of hospital supervisors and certain measures of organisational performance. It focused on a criterion of organisational performance termed 'organisational stress'. Measures of the stress variables were related to the leadership dimensions of consideration and structure. Oaklander and Fleishman obtained correlations of 0.37 and 0.46 between supervisors' consideration scores and their own ratings of the degree of stress present between units in a large hospital.

Both the Lowin et al. (1969) and the Oaklander & Fleishman (1964) studies briefly outlined here are simplistic, descriptive and static. However, as these two studies are fairly typical of leadership research, Graen, Dansereau and Minami (1972, p. 216) were able to claim that 'research on the two dimensions of leadership style proposed and operationalized by the Ohio State researchers . . . has not advanced much beyond the initial descriptive stage'. Indeed, Greenfield (1979) describes the LBDQ-based research as unusually restrictive and static. As he puts it: 'At best, the LBDQ gives us a single Brownie camera snapshot of a complex and obscure process. We know that much went on before we took the photograph; we know that much will go on after it; and we know that our fuzzy LBDQ snapshot represents only a tiny part of what was going on at the time it was taken' (Greenfield 1979, p. 178). Similarly, Janda (1960) and Yukl (1971) point out that most research has been conducted as if leadership was a unique phenomenon although most of the conceptions of leadership can be explained in more basic variables. This simplistic, static view of leadership has led researchers to exclude intermediate and situational variables, such as power and class relationships, a consideration of which may be necessary in order to understand how leaders' actions can affect the productivity or well-being their subordinates.

Intensive contemporary reviews of the literature by Sayles (1966), Lowin (1968), Korman (1966) and Campbell, Dunnette, Lawler and Weick (1970) indicated that the relation of leader behaviour to subordinate productivity and satisfaction with the leader was still unclear.

Korman (1966) found that there was very little evidence that leadership behavioural and/or attitudinal variation, as defined by scores on the Leadership Behaviour and Leadership Opinion Questionnaire, was predictive of later effectiveness and/or satisfaction criteria. From his investigation it appears that the majority of validity studies provide *no* evidence, even in cases of

positive relationships, that variation on the above scales predicts different kinds of worker behaviour. His other main criticism was of the research designs of the studies (e.g. of the Oaklander and Fleishman (1964) study mentioned above). While these studies emphasise that the effects of 'consideration' and 'initiating structure' have become almost bywords in American industrial psychology, it is apparent that very little is known about how these variables may predict work-group performance or about conditions which affect such predictions. Korman (1966, p. 360) concluded at the time, and it might be suggested still: 'We cannot even say whether they have any predictive significance at all'.

But while the situationalist approach to leadership was seen to be virtually worthless on its own terms (i.e. in terms of controlling and extracting more work from subordinates), it has also been criticised for working by stealth in seeking to manipulate the employees of organisations (see Leavitt 1964; Perrow 1979; Tinker & Lowe 1982). By ignoring inequalities of organisational power an acceptance of the power status quo was implied. Industrial psychologists sought to present a conception of leadership which might meet the socio-emotional needs of workers, 'thus ending various kinds of irrational hostility in the factory and the "need" for workers to unite in opposition to management (i.e. via unionization)' (Bramel & Friend 1981, p. 868). Such manipulative ploys by both industrial psychologists and industrial sociologists were recognised by workers as the management strategies that they clearly were. Indeed, the United Auto Workers described some industrial sociologists as 'cow sociologists seeking to milk the workers and make them more contented' (quoted in Tinker & Lowe 1982, p. 335). In a similar attempt to stroke employees, the authoritarian-democratic discussion of leadership style, which will be next examined, advocated democratic leadership but without any fundamental change in the power distribution within the organisation.

The authoritarian–democratic continuum

Parallel to the Ohio State University research model of consideration and initiating structure was the Lewinian model of leadership style graded in the theoretical continuum from authoritarian leadership to democratic leadership (see Lewin 1965). Lewin used as his base the oft-quoted study conducted by Lewin, Lippitt and White (1939) at the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station. Groups of boys and girls, ten and eleven years of age, were chosen for a mask-making club. There were eleven meetings

of the groups, the democratic group meeting always two days ahead of the autocratic one. The democratic group chose its activities freely, and whatever they chose to do the autocratic group was ordered to do. In this way the activities of the group were equated. In a third group, a laissez-faire group, help and information were given only on request. Among other things, Lewin, Lippitt and White found that the group subject to authoritarian leadership needed much closer control than did the democratic group. This paper is often used to support the assumption that democratic or participative leadership has more beneficial effects than has authoritarian leadership.

There is an approximate analogy between the authoritarian–democratic leadership styles and the consideration and initiating structure of the Ohio school. Campbell et al. (1970) claim that the initiating structure as used by the Ohio group has an authoritarian factor which includes variables such as planning work, emphasising deadlines, ruling with an iron hand and refusing to explain actions. In describing consideration and initiating structure, Newport (1962) suggests that they are similar to the democratic and autocratic types of leadership, while Sayles (1966) has pointed out that 'employee orientation', which is a factor of consideration, is usually associated with democratic leadership.

Thus a similar problem occurs with authoritarian and democratic styles as existed in the Ohio studies, namely that there is the tendency to ignore other factors which may influence the relationships between members of the group, particularly the unequal power distribution and the class nature of social relations in organisations (see Watkins 1983; Salaman 1981).

Moreover, research into authoritarian–democratic styles of leadership (Roberts & Jessor 1958; Scodel & Mussen 1953; Slack & Cook 1973; Simpson 1972; Weiss, Sayles & Bode 1970) uses the California F-scale devised by Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson and Sanford (1950). However, there has been increasing criticism of the use of the California F-scale and the use of the term 'authoritarian' in determining leadership styles. Wrightsman and Deaux (1981) outline several criticisms of the scaling method. They point out that because the F-scale is worded to detect merely agreement it does not discriminate between authoritarianism and acquiescence. Also, they doubt whether the various components of the scale – prejudice, ethnocentricity, intolerance of ambiguity, and political conservatism – hang together. Hollander (1971) considers that the question of authoritarianism illustrates the problem of treating structure and style as though they were one. The

California F-scale of authoritarianism bears only an imperfect relationship to characteristic modes of behaving or to organisational structure. 'Yet the term authoritarian is applied to attitudes, behavior dispositions, and social structure without the needed qualifications about their imprecise fit' (Hollander 1971, p. 6). Further, Hogan (1972) conducted research which showed that subjects have the ability to 'fake bad' on the F-scale, thus casting doubt on its reliability.

The results of research on the *effectiveness* of authoritarian-democratic styles are equally inconclusive. This is illustrated, for instance, by Anderson's (1959) study of the differences between authoritarian and democratic teachers. The two questions he sought to answer were:

1 Is there sufficient evidence that one of these two styles of leadership is more effective?
2 Does the authoritarian-democratic continuum provide an adequate conceptualisation of leadership?

In examining 32 studies of 'teacher-centred' and 'learner-centred' teaching styles, Anderson found that 11 studies reported greater learning under learner-centred instruction, 13 found no significant difference between the styles, and 8 found greater learning under teacher-centred instruction. Anderson suggests several reasons for the lack of consistency among investigations.

Firstly, there is a lack of methodological rigour and inadequate research design in leadership studies. Secondly, there is a lack of familiarity with other research. Thirdly, and perhaps most important, there is a lack of precise operational definitions of leadership styles. This is part of the overall problem of leadership research, of trying to measure a multivariate situation in single dimensions.

The awareness of the importance of other factors is demonstrated in the research of Weiss et al. (1970) and Simpson (1972). The former study looked at the possibility that students with authoritarian personalities will react positively, in terms of attitudes and performance, to authoritarian or teacher-centred teaching styles, while students with non-authoritarian personalities may react negatively to the same teaching style. They found that both high and low F-scale scored students performed better when taught by teachers whose F-scale scores were similar to their own. Simpson (1972) investigated the proposition that education reduces differences in authoritarianism. However, he found that education does not necessarily reduce authoritarianism. Also when Meade (1970) investigated what he termed the 'cultural variable' in leadership styles, he found that with Chinese subjects authoritarian leadership produced a greater degree of cohesiveness of judgment and effectiveness than did the democratic style. This,

he argued, indicates the importance of coming to an understanding of how learning and acculturation affect the needs of followers in different cultural settings.

Sayles (1966) conducted research into supervisory style and productivity. The study was based on the distinction between authoritarian and democratic leadership styles. He especially investigated the assumption that, with other conditions held constant, employees will produce more under democratic supervision than they would have produced under authoritarian supervision. He found that, on examination, the former experimental studies indicated that there was no consistent superiority of one style over the other. Of the six studies for which objective data is available, one reports democratic supervision to be more effective, one reports authoritarian supervision to be more effective, while the other four showed no differences of effectiveness between the two styles. This is of special relevance to studies in the education field, where productivity is so vague and so difficult to define. Sayles's criticism of the Lewin et al. study (1939) was that no objective measure of productivity was reported by the authors, and, therefore, it is impossible to determine accurately which of the two styles evoked the higher production. Thus it would seem to be unwise to examine organisational or group effectiveness in terms of leadership styles for the following reasons. Firstly, there is the problem of defining effectiveness. Fiedler (1967) points out that effectiveness has been variously defined as output, morale, satisfaction or any task performance. Secondly, the research designs ignore other pertinent variables. Thirdly, the lack of any common definitions or research results negates any likelihood of prediction.

Recent articles by Carey (1977) and Bates (1983) argue that the conclusions derived from the research of Lewin, Lippitt and White appear to contradict the data. Even though the data indicated that there were fewer aggressive acts under autocratic leadership than under democratic leadership, the data were interpreted to present democracy more favourably. It was claimed that democratic leadership was more efficient and produced less aggression than an autocratic style. Carey concludes that

> the most obvious thing about this study is its total triviality, and irrelevance to anything whatever. Yet . . . this study was particularly influential in courses in industrial psychology and management where it has been much cited to prove the superiority of a 'human relations' style of supervision that is commonly referred to as 'democratic'.
>
> (Carey 1977, p. 33)

However, the importance of the study has been on an ideological plane. Its advocacy of certain styles of leadership has been used ideologically as a stroking device to reduce the antagonism between employers and employees and to reduce the strength of unions. As Bates puts it:

> When the research is carefully scrutinised, the apparent focus on . . . democratic leadership . . . collapse[s] into managerial considerations of worker control, increased productivity and ideological legitimation.
>
> (Bates 1983, p. 31)

So, like the other studies of leadership critically reviewed in this monograph, the studies on leadership styles were concerned with extracting greater productivity while legitimating the power status quo and the class relations of organisations.

However, the same deficiencies are still evident in the most recent influential work on leadership which has been undertaken by Fiedler, and it is this work which will be discussed next.

Fiedler's contingency model of leadership

The work of Fiedler has been an attempt to synthesise the relatively unsuccessful attempts of the 'trait school' and of the situationalists of Ohio. As mentioned earlier, Fiedler defines the leader as:

> *the individual in the group given the task of directing and coordinating task-relevant group activities or who, in the absence of a designated leader, carries the primary responsibility for performing these functions in the group*
>
> (Fiedler 1967, p. 8)

Effectiveness is evaluated in terms of group performance on the group's primary assigned task. Morale and member satisfaction are seen as by-products rather than as measures of task-group performance. However, Fiedler recognises that this relationship may change in the case of the military or of schools, in which the building of morale or the increase of member satisfaction is the primary goal of the leader and is his explicit task. Fiedler's model of leadership is termed a 'contingency model of leadership' because it assumes that the leader's contribution to group performance depends on both his leadership style, in terms of either task orientation or person orientation, and the favourableness of the situation for the leader. As Shiflett and

Nealey (1972) point out, the contingency model hypothesises that the leader's style, as indicated by the leader's esteem for his least preferred co-worker (the LPC score), interacts with the group-task situation to determine group productivity. There are thus two main components, the group-task situation and the leader's style (the LPC score), which are correlated to form the contingency model.

The group-task situation

In the attempt to classify interacting groups, Fiedler (1967, p. 22) postulated that in the determination of situation favourableness three variables were of 'major importance':

1 the leader's position power;
2 the structure of the task; and
3 the interpersonal relationships between leader and members.

Fiedler's first variable, *position power*, is the 'degree to which the position itself enables the leader to get his group members to comply with and accept his direction and leadership' (Fiedler 1967, p. 22). Fiedler relates position power to French and Raven's (1959) concepts of legitimate, reward and coercive power. Thus a leader with high position power is one who can utilise rewards or impose sanctions and whose authority over his subordinates is supported by the organisational structure. A leader with low-position power is one who is essentially restricted.

The operational measure of position power is a 'simple 18 item checklist which contains various indices of position power' (Fiedler 1967, p. 23). The first two and the seventh items on the checklist are:

1 Compliments from the leader are appreciated more than compliments from other group members.
2 Compliments are highly valued, criticisms are considered damaging.
7 The leader's opinion is accorded considerable respect and attention.

If the power bases of these items are examined more carefully, however, it would seem that they are examples of referrent power rather than the three bases of power advocated by Fiedler. Moreover, numbers 8 and 15 on the scale (Fiedler 1967, p. 24) are clearly concerned with French and Raven's (1959) base of expert power:

8 The leader's special knowledge or information (and the members' lack of it) is accorded considerable respect and attention.

15 The leader knows his own as well as the members' jobs and could finish the work himself if necessary.

Thus by introducing examples of referrent and expert power the checklist deviates from its stated basis of formation which was said to rest on the use of legitimate, reward and coercive power (see Fiedler 1967, p. 24).

Fiedler's second variable, *task structure*, is the degree to which the task is *either* made clear to the group (this implies spelling out the extent to which it can be done 'by the numbers' or according to 'a detailed set of standard operating instructions') *or* must be left vague and undefined (in such a situation it is difficult to exert leadership influence as neither the leader nor followers know what has to be done or how it may be accomplished) (Fiedler 1965, p. 117).

In operationally measuring task structure Fiedler relied on the ten dimensions suggested by Shaw (1965) for the classification of tasks. From these he extracted four (Fiedler 1967, p. 28):

1 decision verifiability;
2 goal clarity;
3 goal path multiplicity; and
4 solution specificity.

However, he fails to make clear why he used these four dimensions in preference to the other six put forward by Shaw. Also, the definition of task structure in terms of defined or undefined is too black and white. There is little concern for the grey areas.

Fiedler's third variable, *leader-member relationships*, is considered to be the most important single dimension of the situational variables (Fiedler 1972a, 1972b). The relationship between the leader and his subordinates is partly dependent upon the leader's personality. The liked and respected leader can obtain compliance from his subordinates under circumstances which, in the case of a disliked or distrusted leader, would lead to open revolt (Fishbein, Landy & Hatch 1969a, 1969b). Leader-member relationships are measured by sociometric nomination techniques that ask group members to name the most influential person in the group or the person they would most like to have as leader of the group. They can also be measured by the leader's group atmosphere (GA) score, a 10-item semantic differential scale. This latter measure is used most frequently. However, group atmosphere may reflect aspects of group climate other than the relations between leaders and members, e.g. tension among group members. In fact, Mitchell, Biglan, Oncken and Fiedler (1970-71) report low interrelations between the GA and the sociometric

measure. Their findings suggest that 'sociometric measures and group atmosphere ratings by different participants do not compose a single dimension' (Mitchell et al. 1970–71, p. 263).

A second major criticism of Fiedler's third variable is that it would appear that the least preferred co-worker measure, the LPC (discussed under 'Leadership style' later), and the leader–member relationships measures measure similar dimensions (McMahon 1972). This is a result of the use of identical items in both the LPC and the GA. McMahon (1972, p. 703) claims that '80% of the group atmosphere is contained in the LPC measure'. Thus it would appear that the dependent variable (the LPC) of the contingency model and one of the independent variables (leader–member relationships) are similar if not the same dimensions.

Lastly, Mitchell et al. (1970–71) point out that leader–member relationships concern only the relationships between the leaders and the members and ignore relationships among group members. He claims that these relationships are important for the ability of the leader to influence group members.

Fiedler then trichotomised the three dimensions – position power, task structure and leader–member relationships – and the result is an 8-cell classification of leadership situations (see Table 1). These situations vary along a continuum from favourableness to unfavourableness for the leader. Also, each of these group-task situations may require different forms of leadership behaviour for the group to be most effective.

Table 1 Dimensions of group-task situations

Group-task situation	Affective leader–member relations	Task structure	Leader's position power
1	Good	Structured	High
2	Good	Structured	Low
3	Good	Unstructured	High
4	Good	Unstructured	Low
5	Poor	Structured	High
6	Poor	Structured	Low
7	Poor	Unstructured	High
8	Poor	Unstructured	Low
8A	Very poor	Structured	High

Source: Adapted from Mitchell et al. 1970–71, p. 253.

Situation 1 is considered to be the most favourable leadership situation and situation 8 is regarded as the least favourable. While the two extremes of the continuum present few

conceptual difficulties, Fiedler (1967, p. 34) acknowledges that the intermediate steps incorporate a number of limitations which have forced him to add situation *8A*.

Leadership style

Fiedler then attempted to correlate these dimensions of group-task situations with leadership style. He measured leadership style using the least preferred co-worker (LPC) scale. When using this scale, subjects are asked to think of all persons with whom they have ever worked and then to describe the one person with whom they have found it most difficult to work.

The scale contains 16 bipolar, 8-point dimensions, e.g:

Friendly	----------							Unfriendly
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Cooperative	----------							Uncooperative
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

(Fiedler 1972a)

Basically Fiedler, O'Brien and Ilgen (1969) view low LPC people as being task-orientated in their leadership style. They seek need gratification from working on the task or from task achievement. High LPC people are more concerned with interpersonal relations.

However, in 1972 Fiedler revised his thinking on the LPC which he then admitted had been 'grossly' over-simplified. He lists three reasons for the revision (Fiedler 1972b, p. 392):

1 the weak and inconsistent results from high and low LPC measures;
2 low LPC persons tend to describe themselves as concerned with good relations, while high LPC persons describe themselves as self-oriented; and
3 the former interpretation did not allow for complex interactions between LPC and situational favourableness in determining interpersonal behaviour.

This new interpretation of the LPC is summarised in Table 2.

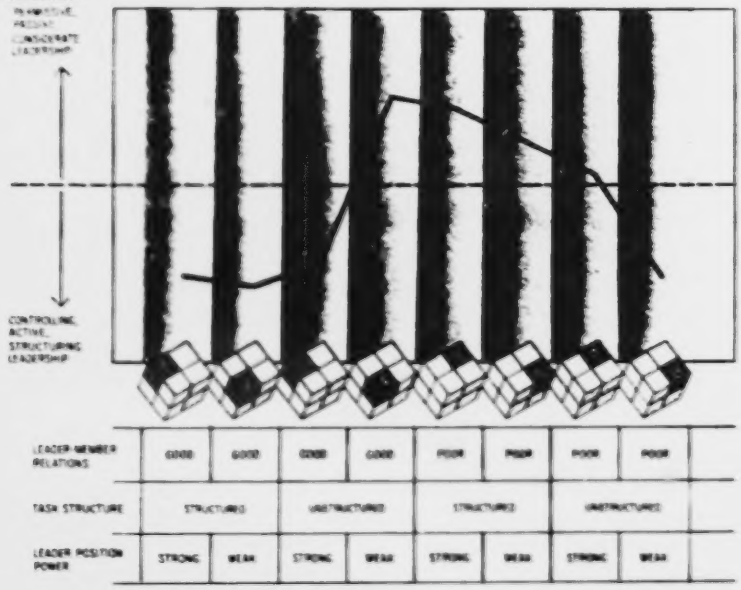
The LPC is correlated with the range of situations that the groups work in, as in the 8-cell model of group-task situations (see graph in Figure 1). This then gives the contingency model, which indicates that '"task-orientated" low LPC leaders perform better in favorable and unfavorable situations, and the "relationship-oriented" high LPC leaders are more effective in situations of intermediate favorableness' (Fiedler 1972b, p. 407).

Table 2 Semantic presentation of the relationship of LPC and leader behaviour as described by self and by others in favourable and unfavourable situations

	Self-description	Description by others	
		Favourable situation	*Unfavourable situation*
High LPC	Concerned with task	Concerned with task	Concentrates on interpersonal relations
Low LPC	Concerned with good relations	Concerned with good relations	Concentrates on task

Source: Fiedler 1972b, p. 393.

Figure 1 How the style of effective leadership varies with the situation



Source: Fiedler 1965, p. 118.
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The need for revision has indicated one of the problems of the LPC which has caused many writers to have misgivings about the contingency model (Graen, Alvares, Orris & Martella 1970; Graen, Alvares & Orris 1971; Graen et al. 1972; Yukl 1970; McMahon 1972; O'Brien 1969; Sample & Wilson 1965; Fishbein et al. 1969a, 1969b). Fishbein and his colleagues consider that a consistent general halo may not occur when leaders evaluate their

least preferred co-worker. That is, when high LPC Ss are asked to rate their least preferred co-worker on Fiedler's Esteem Scale, they are a markedly different type of person than are low LPC individuals' (Fishbein et al. 1969b, p. 184). In this way the leaders' attitudes about the task-relevant attributes of a co-worker may be independent of his attitudes about the co-worker's social attributes. Moreover, a number of studies, which found no correlation, have been made into the behavioural correlates of LPC scores. Yukl (1970) concludes that the absence of a clear conceptual interpretation of LPC scores is paralleled by a lack of empirical data concerning the relation of LPC scores to leader behaviour. Graham (1973, p. 60) concludes that in spite of nearly 20 years of research the psychological meaning of LPC, the main predictor variable in the contingency model, remains a mystery.

Mitchell et al. (1970–71) also point out that a number of studies have not supported the interpretation of the LPC score as relating to 'task-versus-relationship' orientation. Steiner (1959) found that low LPC subjects were socially more expansive on three social distance measures and less extrapunitive than high LPC subjects. Mitchell et al. (1970–71) found that low LPC subjects were more concerned about the interpersonal relation in a task setting than were the high LPC subjects. Moreover, in judging leadership situations high LPC subjects were more aware of position power and task structure than were low LPC subjects. These findings led Mitchell to call for a re-examination of the conceptualisation of the LPC.

Fiedler himself saw the LPC as being very similar to the Ohio model of consideration and initiating structure. He considers any divergencies 'relatively minor' (Fiedler 1970). However, a study by Weissenberg and Gruenfeld (1966) found little correlation between the two and Graen et al. (1971) also found a low correlation. Fishbein et al. (1969a, 1969b), after a review of the literature, concluded that it is still not clear just what the LPC is measuring. McMahon (1972) also found that there is a lack of agreement in what the LPC is measuring. Indeed, he argued that the contingency theory seems to be lacking in substance and explanatory power, which should be one of the primary goals of any theory. Fishbein et al. (1969b) have illustrated that Fiedler keeps changing ground on his LPC score. In 1958 he viewed the LPC score as a measure of a leadership effectiveness trait. In 1961 he saw low LPC persons as being more controlling and task-orientated and high LPC persons as being compliant and interpersonally orientated. In 1966 he emphasised a motivational rather than a behavioural basis to the LPC. In 1969 he introduced the variable of stress. In 1972 (as indicated above) he then tried to

combine some of these disparate variables into a new model of LPC.

Some general criticisms of the contingency model

Ashour (1973) also has criticised the theoretical adequacy of the contingency model. From an analysis of the cumulative results he argues that Fiedler's claims are not fully supported by the empirical evidence. He points out that

> *not only does a theory have to offer valid and nontrivial predictions, but it also has to provide meaningful explanations of the relations and predictions it proposes* . . . The model is an *empiric generalization* that is not even fully supported by the empirical results; it is *not a theory*.
>
> (Ashour 1973, p. 375)

The contingency model merely suggests a set of relationships without exploring the basic dimensions of those relationships. Such considerations as the class basis of organisations and the ideological legitimation of organisational hierarchies are conveniently avoided, implying an implicit acceptance of the power status quo. The recent research of Wilkinson and Smith has emphasised that management does not implement and stress 'humanistic' ideas like leadership for the benefit of all members of the organisation, but that the implementation of these ideas

> is purely for reasons of motivating the workforce; it is not to do with 'looking after the other side' . . . The . . . managers, then, according to personnel officer Pat Thomas, see themselves as 'people people'. Being a person person means looking for a new way of inculcating a solidarity in the workforce amenable to management but antithetical to the union.
>
> (Wilkinson & Smith 1984, p. 105)

In addition to the above considerations Ashour concludes that

> Fiedler's contingency model and its related research have serious empirical, methodological and theoretical problems. [Any] attempt to improve the empirical validity of the model and its meaningfulness would have to start with solving the methodological and theoretical problems'.
>
> (Ashour 1973, p. 376)

It is clear that Fiedler's contingency model is far from perfect. In particular it presents a static picture of the leaders'

followers. The followers are acted upon; they are led. There is no hint of contestation or resistance which would bring about an ongoing dialectic of change. In short, people are presented as mere ciphers without any hint of real, vibrant human agency (Giddens 1979). In the light of the evidence, anyone attempting to use it to measure leadership in schools would be left with uncertain and dubious results. Indeed, Graen et al. (1970, 1971) claim that their two studies 'cast grave doubt on the plausibility of the contingency model of leadership-effectiveness' (1970, p. 295), while Shiflett and Nealey's (1972, p. 381) findings 'give one little confidence in the ability of the contingency model . . .'

Perrow sums up his discussion of Fiedler's work by arguing that

> one is tempted to say that the research on leadership has left us with the clear view that things are far more complicated and 'contingent' than we initially believed, and that, in fact, they are so complicated and contingent that it may not be worth our while to spin out more and more categories and qualifications – if we wish to learn about organizations. Already, the task of either training leaders to fit the jobs or designing jobs to fit the leaders, a position Fiedler is led to advocate, appears to be monumental. If leadership techniques must change with every change in group personnel, task, timing, experience, and so on, then either leaders or jobs must constantly change.
>
> (Perrow 1979, p. 107)

Such an absurd situation reflects the predicament in which much of the traditional leadership work finds itself. It should be clear from the literature reviewed in this monograph that most of the conventional approaches to leadership are under attack on all fronts. Yet amazingly this highly questionable material is still included in standard texts. The reasons for this would seem to be based on ideologically concerns and an attempt to maintain the power status quo in organisations. These reasons will be discussed in the next section.

Implications of the critical review and possible alternatives

One implication of this review of the leadership concept is that if people are going to use the term 'leadership' or apply it to education they should be conversant with any criticism or deficiencies which are inherent in it. For, as Perrow (1979, p. 98) bluntly states, 'the history of research in this area is one of

progressive disenchantment' (see also Pfeffer 1977). In addition, students of administration should be aware of the ideological implications of much of the work on leadership. In discussing the growing resentment towards private enterprise in the 1930s and 1940s Carey addresses the issue of ideology:

> What better words to renovate that image than 'human relations', 'participation', 'democracy'? And who better than supposedly non-partisan social scientists to plaster those words all over business' public image? And who better than social scientists to endorse the 'harmony' thesis by forecasting a new era of cooperation in industry that is to follow from the 'scientific' discovery that there is no basic conflict in industry because, while managements are certainly interested in money, what workers really want is not more money, but love, human relations, vacuous forms of democratic participation and finally non-monetary 'self actualization'.
>
> (Carey 1977, p. 36)

It seems, however, that writers continue to use the concept of leadership without much reference to the overwhelmingly critical perspective which is presented in, for example, the paper by Korman (1966) on the Ohio school; those by Carey (1977), Bates (1983) or Sayles (1966) on leadership styles; and those by O'Brien (1969), Mitchell et al. (1970–71) or Ashour (1973) on the LPC. Over a period of time these scholars have indicated that any concentration on such a nebulous concept as leadership may be worthless as the research may have no reliability, validity or predictive power. Fiedler himself has not hesitated to be critical of his own work, especially his contingency model (see Fiedler 1967, 1970, 1972a, 1972b, 1978; Mitchell et al. 1970–71).

Another implication of this critical review and the research into leadership is that because no one has yet succeeded in resolving the problem of arriving at any adequate conceptualisation of leadership it is probably best to analyse the notion in terms of concepts with greater explanatory power. Hollander (1971) has argued that a variety of organisational processes are explicable in terms other than leadership. Following in this vein, House and Rizzo (1972) have presented a model in which role conflict and ambiguity are the critical variables in organisational relationships. Similarly, Nyberg has attempted to explain educational organisations in terms of power relationships, for, he argues, 'no one can avoid power in social relations; one can only avoid thinking about it and understanding it' (Nyberg 1981, p. 172).

Research into group or organisational relationships might well start by looking at power relationships. Questions to be asked are: Who has the power? Why have they the power? Can power be redistributed? Can the power in the organisation be equalised? From this perspective leadership can be viewed as a subset of power. All leader and subordinate relationships involve a power wielder–power recipient relationship. Not all power situations necessarily involve leadership, however. As Burns (1978, p. 18) puts it: 'All leaders are actual or potential power holders, but not all power holders are leaders'.

In the light of the substantial critiques of leadership, the sentiments of Thibaut and Kelly aptly sum up much of the work on leadership:

> Rather than going directly into the complex phenomena and surplus-meaning-laden terminology encompassed by the term leadership, research must first be directed toward clarifying problems of power structures, norms and goals, task requirements, functional roles, etc., each of which is complex and challenging enough in its own right. In short, an understanding of leadership must rest on a more basic understanding of the structure and functioning of groups.
>
> (Thibaut & Kelly 1961, p. 290)

By looking at more basic underpinnings of social relations the charge might be avoided that too often leadership concepts have become tainted by the manipulative overtones implicit in much of the research discussed in this monograph. In schools, also, the facile employment of a 'motherhood' term like leadership can obscure the seduction and subversion carried out in the name of administration. In such a context leadership can be reduced to the exploitation of the school community through the manipulative and subversive tactics of those in powerful management positions. Gronn (1984) has detailed the techniques of a school principal who saw his role of so-called leadership in terms of manipulating people whom, it seems, he saw essentially as 'cultural dopes' (Giddens 1979). As a respondent in Gronn's study remarked, the principal 'manipulates the way he likes' so that 'he always has complete control' (Gronn 1984, p. 87). Behaviour of this type would seem to be inappropriate for contemporary school administrators in a period of increasing community involvement in the running of schools, of collaborative decision making, a genuine desire to redistribute power on a more equal basis in the educational community, and a general increased thrust towards workplace democracy in Australia (see Greer 1984).

In conclusion two other approaches to the study of leadership will be briefly suggested as a basis for further study. Firstly, a critical approach centering on ideas of class, power and human agency will be mentioned (Giddens 1982; Comstock 1982). Secondly, a dialectical approach to leadership will be discussed. While there is some tension between these two approaches, they indicate likely directions future studies of leadership in educational administration could take.

A critical approach: Class, power and human agency

Critical scholars such as Apple (1982), Bernstein (1977a, 1977b) and Bourdieu (1977) have sought to investigate the importance of power in educational and other social institutions. Bernstein (1977b, p. 68) argues that one of the main considerations of educators should be to resolve how 'power relationships . . . penetrate the organization, distribution, and evaluation of knowledge through the social context'. Implicit in this consideration is how the class structure, which reflects society's power distribution, impinges on organisational relationships and hierarchies of control. In this context Bernstein argues that the origins of power and control in educational systems reside in the basic class structure of society. As he puts it:

> Class structure and relationships constitute and regulate both the distribution of power and the principles of control; that is, constitute and regulate the relationships between categories, the hierarchical form of their constitution *and* regulate the realization of the categories – that is, the principles of control.
>
> (Bernstein 1977a, p. 181)

In this way any consideration of leadership within an educational organisation should be situated in its historical and social milieux. The avoidance of a static, functionalist, ahistorical approach to organisation necessitates an examination of the interaction between human practice and social structures. The latter are the generative rules and power relations which are embedded in a specific historical locale. But the rules and power relations of social institutions not only constrain and enhance human action and practice; they also emerge in time and space out of those very acts (Giddens 1979). Giddens terms such an approach 'structuration'. From such a position the functionalist position embodied in the traditional concept of leadership can be unmasked to reveal its basic class nature and its inherent

inequality of power. In class societies, class domination becomes the structural principle of society, and of its organisations, and the basis of state power (see Giddens 1981).

Moreover, the structurationist approach emphasises that power is a process, refuting any implication of a static relationship. People are knowledgeable and active and have an inherent capacity to and can partially penetrate the forms which dominate them. They exercise choices and options in the way they work and in their actions and reactions within the complex nature of relationships which constitute an organisation. As Giddens puts it:

> Power relations in social systems can be regarded as relations of autonomy and dependence; but no matter how imbalanced they may be in terms of power, actors in subordinate positions are never wholly dependent, and are very often adept at converting whatever resources they possess into some degree of control over the conditions of reproduction of the system.
>
> (Giddens 1982, p. 32)

In the production and reproduction of social structures power processes are a central factor. By examining these through a critical approach, the question of whose interests are served in creating certain structures of power and domination might be answered.

A critical approach, then, to the concept of leadership focuses on the power dimensions which underlie the process of reality construction and give force to the human agency of people in organisations. Such a paradigm offers the possibility of a view of educational administration which will help the school community to understand how the most 'efficient' and elaborately devised organisational planning often turns out to be a manipulative trap from which organisational members may have difficulty extricating themselves. The traditional school principal with a disproportionate degree of power was often able to create and implement such manipulative traps through the ability to shape much of the language, direct much of the discourse and guide much of the practice within the educational community. By adopting a critical view of leadership within schools, by recognising that all human agents have some degree of knowledge, by unmasking manipulative, deceptive tactics, school administration would be founded on a more equal power basis. As a consequence, many administrative practices would become demystified as the school community gained a critical understanding of those processes central to the reshaping of school administration on a more participatory, collaborative basis.

A dialectical approach: Symbols and metaphors

A second approach would be to view leadership as a dialectic relationship in the social construction of reality. In a recent study of leadership, Smircich and Morgan (1982) move away from the traditional literature critically reviewed in this monograph to present a picture of leadership as a distinctive form of social practice. Such practice arises out of the constructions and actions of both the leaders and the followers. Thus leadership is a social construction of reality which involves an ongoing interaction. From this argument the relationship is necessarily a dialectical one. As Smircich and Morgan put it:

> The phenomenon of leadership in being interactive is by nature dialectical. It is shaped through the interaction of at least two points of reference, i.e. of leaders and of led.
>
> (Smircich & Morgan 1982, pp. 258–9)

When seen as a dialectic, leadership implies the presence of considerable tensions and contradictions which, when resolved, lead to the continual transformation of the relationship. Thus people in the school community may turn to a particular person to frame and give substance to their sense of reality. However, in turn they may reject, resist or discard that view of reality. This notion of leadership avoids the static, functionalist view presented in much of the literature.

In contrast to the functionalist position, leadership should be seen as a processual dialectical relationship which can offer insights on the production, reproduction and demise of certain organisational practices and structures. Such a processual perspective implies that there is not one pre-ordained or designated leader within the organisation, but that at any time any one member of the organisation can come to the forefront to provide guidance in resolving the tensions and contradictions that beset organisations. As a consequence a dialectic view of the leadership process focuses on the human agency of all members of the organisation as that agency interacts with the constraining or enabling structure of the institution. This ongoing dialectical relationship between individuals and institution implies that both are continuously 'becoming' in time and space, as the dialectics of practice and structure unfold. Thus a dialectic perspective of leadership within a school involves the consideration of all human agents—pupils, parents, teachers, support staff, as well as the principal—in the formation of social institutions whose structured properties are simultaneously the medium and outcome of social

acts (Gidden 1979). As a consequence 'the social world is in a continuous state of becoming – social arrangements which seem fixed and permanent are temporary, arbitrary patterns and any observed social patterns are regarded as one among many possibilities' (Benson 1977, p. 5). With such an ongoing, flowing, dialectic of transformative human action, leaders become followers and followers become leaders in the ebb and flow of organisational interaction.

The tensions and contradictions which provide the thrust within any dialectical relationship are the basis of what Morgan (1981) terms a 'schismatic metaphor'. This metaphor, in contrast to the traditional, mechanical or organic metaphors applied to organisations, presumes that organisations have a tendency towards disintegration. In turn, the resolution of these organisational tensions and contradictions may give rise to a new unity. The ongoing dialectic embodied in the schismatic metaphor provides an understanding of the patterns of social relationships and the forms that organisations take. Moreover, in the resolution of these tensions symbolic, mythical heroes may arise to guide the organisation into new paths (Denhardt 1981). Indeed Denhardt argues that leadership in organisations is often 'a modern ritualized hero system' (1981, p. 94). A symbolic hero may be created or recreated when organisational members vest elements of their world, beliefs and great significance in one particular person (see Morgan, Frost & Pondy 1983). This interpretation and production of social reality is often expressed in military metaphors (Pondy 1983). Thus our symbolic hero leads members in the struggle against difficult odds; ground is won or lost; new lines of attack are formulated and different strategies are planned. If successful the metaphor of emancipation may be conjured up. (see also Lakoff & Johnson 1980). This use of symbol and metaphor exemplifies the rich and complex patterns of cultural activities which are to be found within all social institutions. Coupled with a dialectic perspective, culture may be studied as an ongoing process as people continually construct and reconstruct their reality. The study of such shared symbolic and metaphoric cultural processes can bring about the recognition 'that organizations are not simple systems like machines or adaptive organisms; they are human systems manifesting complex patterns of cultural activity' (Morgan, Frost & Pondy 1983, p. 4).

Conclusion

This monograph has critically reviewed the dominant approaches to leadership found in the organisational and educational administration literature. Much of it was found to be of dubious methodological and theoretical substance. Moreover, it was argued that the bulk of the literature avoided basic questions of class, inequalities of power and hierarchical control and ideology. Leadership was often seen as a stroking device used to obscure the control and manipulative tactics of management. Indeed, leadership was seen in some instances as being the ability to 'con' and manipulate the organisational community according to the whims of the administrator (see Gronn 1984).

Finally, two alternative ways of viewing leadership were presented. The first stressed the importance of class, power and human agency in the administration of education, while the second suggested that leadership should be seen as a dialectic relationship in the social construction of reality.

The presentation of alternative perspectives of leadership has gained additional substance through the attempts in Victoria to reformulate the role of the principal. As a consequence the traditional equation of leadership with manipulation seems to be incongruous with the recent Victorian Education Department guidelines on the 'role of the principal'. In these guidelines the stress appears to be that the principal should be not so much a leader but rather a facilitator. Administrative action would arise not from manipulation and deception but from the facilitation of collaborative, participatory decision-making processes involving and unfolding from the dialectical interaction of the school community. Thus in Victorian schools the principal should, according to the Victorian Education Department,

> facilitate effective communication and collaboration between staff, students, parents and the wider community . . . facilitate links between the school community and the wider community for the benefit of the school . . . foster collaborative and collective decision making among staff . . . [and] facilitate an effective working environment for staff members.
>
> (*Victoria Education Gazette and Teachers' Aid*, 1984, p. 444)

Consequently, when presenting their statements in advertisements for prospective principals, schools invariably stress that they want a principal who will be one of a team, who will participate in and abide by the curricular and administrative decisions arrived at collaboratively by the school community. Thus

Altona High School, for instance, requires a principal who will be committed to

> decision-making processes that involve all groups of the school community in all aspects of school life.
> (*Victoria Education Gazette and Teachers' Aid*, 1984, p. 444)

Boronia Technical School states that the principal which it will appoint will have 'a strong commitment to democratic decision-making proceses' (*Victoria Education Gazette and Teachers' Aid* 1984, p. 445). Eltham High School also emphasises that the person they want for principal is not of the old dominant leader type but one who will be part of a collaborative, participatory community whose decisions are not made by one person. Thus the school states that it

> has a strong commitment to participatory decision-making processes at all levels, actively involving staff, parents and students. The school council (7 parents, 5 teachers, 3 students) maintains close and harmonious working relations with the operations of the school via standing subcommittees for curriculum, finance, building and grounds, canteen and communications.
> (*Victoria Education Gazette and Teachers' Aid*, 1984, p. 446)

It can been argued that with the development of educational administration based on participation and collaboration the traditional views of leadership outlined in the earlier part of this monograph are inappropriate and must be discarded. Instead it is suggested that leadership should be perceived either more basically in terms of power or as a dialectic reflecting the cultural symbols and metaphors of organisations.

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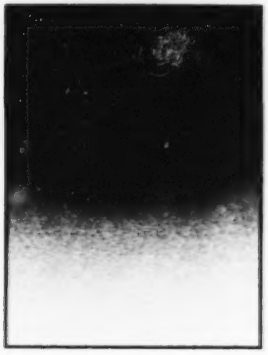
Readings



READING 1

Shaping the image of the great headmaster

R. Protherough

SOURCE

R. Protherough, 'Shaping the image of the great headmaster,' *British Journal of Educational Studies*, vol. 32, no. 3, 1984, pp. 239–50.

In a novel of the early nineteen-twenties, a new headmaster named Horbury dreams of how Lupton might become the country's leading public school. He is clear that such a process depends on his ability to create an appropriate image of himself and of the school: 'It seemed to him that a school legend must be invented.' When he considers how this is to be achieved, the natural way seems to be through an appropriate novel, which would achieve for him what had once been done for Arnold and Rugby: 'a story of school life, a new *Tom Brown* must be written'.[1] The fact that Horbury thinks as he does demonstrates his awareness of the potency of fiction not simply to reflect a world but to create one. In particular he is conscious of the way that books shaped men's notions of the great headmaster from Arnold onwards. What kind of shaping this was, though, deserves a closer examination.

The rising status – and matching salaries – of headmasters in the later Victorian age owed much to the notion that they were the dominant factor in determining a school's fortunes. Biographies and histories suggest that men like Mitchinson (who 'did for Canterbury what Thomas Arnold did for Rugby'), Harper (who 'made Sherborne a public School'), Welldon, Dyne and Pears 'raised and altered their own Schools out of recognition.'[2] It was no accident that the first professional organisation was specifically a conference of headmasters rather than of schools. Horbury had dreams of following in that tradition. Studies of the great headmasters – that 'very superior set of men', as Thring wrote in his diary – have been at pains to stress their variety.[3] Most of them seem to have been energetic and dynamic as well as scholarly, but many were also liberal, witty, reformist, progressive, kindly and understanding. Such qualities largely disappear in the conventional notion of the great headmaster.

Just as images of very different schools coalesced towards the end of the nineteenth century to create a generalised impression of *the* public school, so did the figures of their headmasters: 'the general image had

precedence in the public mind over the individual institution.'[4] An essentially conservative and traditional view, emphasising a very limited range of characteristics, is one of what Geoffrey Holmes has called those 'vague but stubborn images which owe little to what serious work has been done on these groups of professionals but a great deal to common misconceptions. . .'[5] The prevalence of that 'stubborn image' is clear from a whole series of popular novels and we may suspect that such stories had a cumulative effect on opinion. In them, 'greatness' tends to be presented in superficial terms as a matter of presence, a commanding manner, rather than at deeper levels of personality.

By examining some twenty school novels or novels set in school, it is possible to see how restricted a notion they convey of what headmasters are like and what they do. The books to be discussed[6] date from shortly after that first meeting of a number of headmasters that was to initiate the Headmasters' Conference (1869) down to the publication of Alec Waugh's controversial *The Loom of Youth* in the middle of the 1914–18 War. To give an impression of 'the general image', widely read 'popular' novels that deal only incidentally with headmasters have been selected, rather than books by major writers or those which concentrate specifically on teachers and their doings, like *Mr Perrin and Mr Traill* or *The Lanchester Tradition*. Before 1870 the literary portraits of headmasters are enormously varied: men may be shown as scholarly or ignorant, comic or pathetic, are violent or kindly, self-seeking or unworldly. After 1870 much of this variety disappears as writers increasingly conform, consciously or subconsciously, with more or less reverence, to a particular image of the successful head.

What sort of men are these headmasters? To read the novels in quick succession demonstrates that they are almost indistinguishable from one another: indeed in retrospect they seem to merge into a composite figure of which Dr. Grimstone in *Vice Versa* is an embodiment in pastiche. Virtually all are presented as majestic figures, creating a godlike effect of awe and terror, outsize in terms of physique and personality and separated from ordinary mortals by their powers of speech and by a special rhetorical style. 'Dignified', 'grave', 'stern' and 'solemn' are the epithets most frequently used to describe these figures. In brief passages, Dr. Smith is called stern (three times), grave and severe (1876); Dr. Senior is termed grave (four times), stern (twice), firm, sharp and ruthless (1881–2); Dr. Ponsford is severe, stern and ominous (1894). Few of these characters are ever described as laughing or even smiling.

The special qualities which adhere to a headmaster are emphasised in a variety of ways. The title 'The Doctor' is not just a mark of

academic distinction; the fact of not using his name (in at least one book the reader never discovers what the head is called) separates him from other characters. The fictional headmaster is typically never seen except in his academic cap and gown, and rarely appears except on formal occasions. Detachment and isolation have become an essential mark of office rather than a simple administrative convenience.

Those moments when he is seen in state by the school are typically described as awe-inspiring and terrifying. The cluster of overlapping epithets used in the novels under discussion makes an overwhelming impression. The commonest is *awful*, used in five of the books (1876, 1899b, 1902, 1912, 1913b). In four he is said to be an object of *terror* (1881–2, 1902, 1915, 1916), and he is also regarded with *fear* (1912), *dread* (1902) and *awed respect* (1916). Three authors describe the impression caused by the head as *terrible* (1876, 1884, 1905a), two *terrifying* (1905a, 1909), three *impressive* (1876, 1905a, 1916), two *majestic* and *terrific* (1909, 1913b). Other descriptive epithets are *formidable* (1876), *forbidding* (1905a) and *lofty and remote* (1911). In one typical phrase Dr. Brownjohn is said to be 'the personification of majesty, dominion, ferocity and awe.' (1913b)

The result of this awful appearance on the boys is typically 'dead silence' (1894), 'a profound stillness' (1895), 'a thrilling silence' (1905b). In the earliest of these novels, *The Manchester Man*, a note is struck which is to become dominant:

> Dr. Smith's commanding eye swept the trembling rank from end to end, as he stood with impressive dignity to address them . . . Some of the little ones took out their handkerchiefs and began to whimper, fearing condign punishment.
>
> (1876)

In *The Master of the Shell*, when the Doctor's brow darkens,

> Everybody took a long breath. The occasion was as when the judge puts on the black cap before passing sentence of death.
>
> (1894)

Boys in *Fathers of Men* are left 'feeling beaten mongrels every one' or 'awed from skin to core' (1912) when Mr. Thrale reprimands them.

The impression of majesty is increased by the stature of the men. It seems that headmasters as a class were well above average height. Five of them are simply described as *tall* (1881–2, 1884, 1897, 1915, 1916), one is more specifically 'six feet' (1905a), two are *large* or *big* (1896, 1916), two are *powerful* and *commanding* (1902, 1905a), and others are *immense* (1909), *huge* and *titanic* (1913b) or *gigantic* and *enormous* (1915).

In the absence of research correlating promotion with height, it is interesting to speculate whether large men stood a better chance of becoming headmasters because they were thought to be more naturally imposing, or whether the descriptions depend on childish recollections which exaggerate a headmaster's size because of the majesty which surrounded him, or whether this is another example of derivative presentation, books feeding on books. One novel describes a headmaster who is not tall in terms that indicate that this fact is likely to be seen as unusual and goes on immediately to assure the reader that lack of inches was compensated for by other qualities:

> Dr. Spedding . . . was not physically a big man, but he was the fortunate possessor of a singularly powerful face . . . Nose, mouth, and chin were all indicative of strength and resolution.

All of these teachers seem to speak in similar ways. Humour or a light touch is rare. The repeated adverbial terms are *gravely, solemnly, sharply* and *sternly*. Headmasters in a passion are usually said to have *thundered* (1894, 1899, 1913b), *roared, boomed* or *bellowed*. The first paragraph in which Dr. Brownjohn's style of speech is described contains the phrases: 'his voice rumbled in the titanic depths of his body', 'it burst forth in an appalling roar', 'a voice like ten bulls', 'bellowing in a paralyzing bass', 'roar and bellow and rumble and thunder and peal his execration and contempt' (1913b, pp. 151–2). In a one-to-one conversation with Michael, he still speaks 'with a roar', 'bellowed', 'roared', 'shouted' in 'bull-deep accents', 'roared' and 'thundered' (1913b, pp. 275–6). Similarly, in describing Mr. Watson's speech style in *Of Human Bondage*, Maugham rarely uses the words 'he said'. Instead we are repeatedly told that Watson 'shouted', 'bellowed', 'burst into a great bellow', frightened children 'by the roar of his voice'. Even when he takes prayers, 'the supplications thundered out in his loud voice' (1915).

Not only is the voice, like the stature, outsize. There is also frequently the sense of oratory, the suggestion of deliberately cultivated tricks of public speaking. The head is conventionally a clergyman, and the pulpit voice spills over into other contexts. Reproof becomes a sermon; the school a congregation. When the Warden at Bridwell speaks or reads, his hearers are conscious of 'his musical full voice giving an expression to his words of sonorous grace and stately magnificence' (1899a). The Head Master of Harrow 'subtly' changes his tone, and his voice had 'what may be described as an edge to it – the cutting quality so invaluable to any speaker who desires to make a deep impression upon his audience' (1905b). E. W. Hornung's image pushes the Head's claims to divinity about as far as they can decently

go: 'That earnest voice and noble mien . . . were as the voice from Sinai and the face of God to him to-day.' (1912)

Headmaster rhetoric is presented as of a special stilted kind, again with a whiff of the pulpit. Headmasters do not read, they 'peruse' (1881–2), boys are not naughty but 'unprincipled' (1894); a theft is 'a mysterious disappearance of coins of the realm' (1899b). Boyish misdemeanours are described in elevated language, both to intensify their seriousness and to avoid the contamination of commonplace terminology. A pupil is told: 'You are now adding wicked buffoonery to an act in itself sufficiently disreputable' (1899b). The making of paper darts is denounced:

> And so Master Crabtree thinks that the calm and quiet of Sunday afternoon is made to give him leisure to forge these filthy weapons; that the paper you are given to write home on is designed to be desecrated to these foul usages, and the ink to supply filth for them.
> (1916, p. 12)

Serious misdeeds cannot be named; they are 'those cases from which every clean, manly boy must recoil with disgust' (1905b). Punishment too has to be elevated by appropriate metaphors. Expulsion is announced as a surgical or horticultural operation:

> Pruning is of no avail; the branch must be sacrificed.
> (1899b)

> This sort of malignant disease must be cut out.
> (1915)

Among the other more obvious features of language, there is the insistent use of repetition: 'A most foolish thing to do, Gosling . . . a most foolish thing to do – an exceedingly foolish thing to do. I am surprised. An exceedingly foolish thing' (1896, p. 265). Terms rarely come singly if they can be readily coupled in twos or threes: 'prevarication or evasion', 'perverted not to say inverted', 'your lamentable, your unholy, your aboriginal passions', 'a disgraceful, degenerate, disreputable boy', 'cleanse , scour and otherwise purify', 'the immoral, the scandalous, the disgraceful and horribly mistaken course'. (1899b) Strings of largely rhetorical questions are used to brow-beat pupils: 'What do you mean by it, you young blackguard? . . . What good are you to the school? . . . Why do you want to give up your Classics? . . . What's the good of History? . . . Why didn't you get your certificate? . . . Aren't you ashamed of yourself? . . . What do you expect to do when you leave school?' (1913b)

The styles of speech of the different men are as interchangeable as

their appearance; those that are distinguishable as individual voices push the general characteristics to the point of absurdity. R. D. Blackmore, for example, puts into the mouth of Dr. Rumbelow an almost unintelligible address which sounds as though it had been rather poorly translated from the Latin.

> . . . hearken to the words which I, with friendly meaning, speak among you. It has been ordained by the powers above, holding Olympian mansions, that all things come in circling turn to mortal men who live on corn. Times there are for the diligent study of the mighty minds of old, such as we, who now see light of sun, and walk the many-feeding earth, may never hope to equal. But again there are seasons when the *dies festi* must be held, and the *feriæ Latinæ*, which a former pupil of mine translated 'a holiday from Latin'. Such a season now is with us. Once more it has pleased the good Lucina to visit our humble *tugurium*; and we are strictly called upon to observe the *meditrinalia*. Since which things are so, it behoves me to proclaim to all of you *feriæ tridui imperativæ*.
>
> (1884, pp. 12–3)

What do these headmasters do? The most striking fact is perhaps how remote they seem from the actual work of the school, which seems to be delegated to others. Instead of being the leader of a group of 'assistants' essentially engaged in the same work as himself, the head is increasingly seen as the organiser of a team of specialists; his authority rests less on scholarship and more on his management skills; in particular he tends to be judged by his public appearances. The dominance of the state occasion can be seen by comparing the figures in these novels with that of the Doctor in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. The latter is seen in a considerable variety of rôles: he teaches alongside his staff, he consults with colleagues, he interviews and guides pupils, he preaches in chapel, he chats as a friend with groups of boys, he is seen as a father with his family, he brings about changes in tradition, he has boys to tea, he visits those who are sick. Much of this variety disappears in the later novels. Dr. Pearson hardly appears outside the school chapel in the pages of *Gerald Eversley's Friendship* (1895), which may indicate how the author, the Rev. J. E. C. Welldon, saw his own rôle as head of Harrow, before he became a bishop.

In a number of novels published early in the twentieth century, like *The Bending of a Twig* (1906) and *Follow Up!* (1908), the headmaster becomes nothing more than a shadowy figure in the background. Boys' real encounters are with housemasters and form teachers. In *The Harrovians* (1913a) there is hardly any mention of Dr. Naughton and he plays no part in the action of the novel. It is as though emphasising the

head's conventional majesty by insisting on his isolation and by restricting the functions he performs has progressively made him of less interest to the story-teller.

In the novels under discussion, the major rôles which headmasters fulfil are the ritual ones of judge, executioner, priest and monarch. The disciplinary function is frequently the dominant one. On the rare occasions when headmasters talk with individuals, it is almost always to reprove or punish. Dr. Chapple (1897) is said to be particularly famed for his 'swishing powers' and is reputed to have birched forty-three boys in a single day. He tells one pupil: 'My determination is to assist you to be an ornament to Littlebury, and I shall flog you till you are!' (1897, p. 51). In *The Human Boy* boys are flogged for offences of quite different degrees of seriousness: for fighting, for dishonesty, for running away or for shooting with a catapult at the Doctor's wife's parrot. One lengthy description of the Doctor hard at work pictures him beating the wrong boy by mistake, 'doing all he knew with the birch . . . the hottest flogging he'd given to any boy in his life' (1899, pp. 148–50). A similar assumption that flogging is the sole remedy for most offences – an error in Greek, or shirking work, or breaking bounds – runs through *Fathers of Men*. Mr. Thrale is daily perceived in the role of 'venerable executioner'.

> It was after second school that the day's delinquents were flogged by the Head Master before the eyes of all and sundry who liked to peer through the diamond panes of his class-room windows. (1912, pp. 135–6)

Indeed, the headmasters of these last two books are hardly seen except in threatening or administering punishment.

State occasions tend to be the key scenes in most of these novels. Virtually all the headmasters are described as preaching affecting sermons in chapel, addressing the school at prize-givings or other occasions and publicly denouncing wrongdoing. Their position and power are emphasised by the accompanying ceremonial, the throne-like chair, the surrounding acolytes. In one story, when the boys are summoned to the Great Hall,

> The masters were all assembled upon the great platform of the hall, the Doctor wearing his robes, while each master, in addition to wearing his cap and gown, wore his university hood as well.
>
> It was an impressive scene . . .
> The head-master sat in a carved chair, one of the famous relics of that great historic school, while the rest of the masters sat on each side of him.

> When all the boys had entered and taken their places, the bell ceased tolling. There was breathless silence as Doctor Chapple rose. (1897, p. 257)

The purpose of all this ceremonial is the expulsion of a wrong-doer. He is brought in, pale and trembling, to observe a dramatic ritual in which 'the crest was torn from his cap, his cricketing and football colours were formally rent', and his name was crossed out by the Doctor from the school register. The idea of blotting out a boy's very existence in the school runs through a number of books. Expulsion is presented to Jan by his headmaster as being 'condemned to death', having 'forfeited his existence.' (1912, p. 328) The unnamed Warden at Bridwell is shown exclusively in ceremonious religious or semi-religious functions, when he holds forth 'from his lofty canopied stall' in chapel, or from his 'great chair of state' in Hall or from the dais in Big Schoolroom (1899a). He is little more than a fine voice for carrying out traditional rituals.

The more we examine these passages, the clearer it becomes that what is being described is a series of very similar *performances*. The essential quality of a headmaster, it seems to be suggested, is that he should be able to act out the accepted rôle, to play convincingly what is becoming a stereotype. There is something theatrical about all the major set-pieces in these books.

That is one of the reasons that *Vice Versa* (1882)[7] is of particular interest. Unlike the other books, which show men subconsciously conforming to type, this comic story shows a headmaster who is more than half aware of giving a performance, and who gets pleasure from it. Dr. Grimstone is an embodiment of the stock features of the 'great' headmaster of the late nineteenth century. He plays out what he and the boys recognise as the appropriate rôle. We may be tempted to find him an oversize parody, but both the author and the model thought that he was drawn straight from life.[8]

Largely through his use of the simple device of the magical stone which transforms father to son and *vice versa*, Anstey is able to present Grimstone in a double focus: as that frightening figure of authority, a stock late Victorian headmaster, and as a relatively kindly and understanding family man, the human being that is overlooked in nearly all the school novels. In fact, without being over-pretentious about a light-hearted story, it is possible to say that not only the main plot but the whole book turns on ideas of disguise, performance, appearance and reality. Doctor Grimstone is portrayed throughout as a man giving a performance of a tyrant, much to his own satisfaction, in the style of the Demon King or Mr. Darling doubling as Captain

Hook. On his first appearance, at the railway station, his manner with the boys is one of an 'elaborate geniality', 'with a slight touch of the ogre in his tone'. Repeated phrases reinforce the impression: 'dangerous politeness', 'his most blood-curdling tone', 'ghastly form of gaiety'.[9]

The Doctor's disciplinary methods depend largely on his voice. He has a passion for rhetorical denunciation, and is 'addicted to awful silences'.[10] The features of his oratory, apparently drawn from life, are precisely the same as those of the other fictional headmasters discussed here. The Doctor's speeches are primarily characterised by their inflated moral tone: even the most trivial infringements of rules are always presented in terms of outrage against a higher code. A new boy who tries to swallow his tears is accused of 'a spirit of captiousness and rebellion'; notes passed between boy and girl are signs of 'precocious and shameless depravity' and the boy involved is 'a youthful reprobate' and 'a moral leper'; scholars who smuggle in sweets are 'essentially base . . . dead to honour and generosity'; inattention signifies a 'career of disorder and rebellion'.[11] Denunciation is made graphic by strong – often animal – images. Boys 'emulate the wild ass in more qualities than those of stupidity and stubbornness' or show 'the viciousness of a kangaroo'; one is a 'crawling reptile', a 'viper'; Paul is 'this serpent', 'this cockatrice', who must not be permitted to 'glide uncrushed . . . within my peaceful fold'; behaviour is 'pure piggishness' or 'characteristic of the dog, an animal which . . . was with the ancients a synonym for shamelessness'.[12] The Doctor never uses one word where two or three in parallel will do, and has an endless supply of synonyms. The forbidden sweets appear in swift succession as 'the pampering products of confectionery', 'compressed illness and concentrated unhealthiness', 'contraband poisons', 'surreptitious sweetmeats', 'pernicious peppermints', and the guilty boy is accused of trying to pervert his schoolfellows to 'deprave them by jujubes, or enervate them with Turkish Delight'.[13] This love of elegant variation enables him to present Paul's apparent attempt to exchange notes with a girl in church as: 'ensnaring the vagrant fancies of innocent but giddy girlhood', the work of 'a libertine . . . who has not scrupled to indite an amatory note', 'pressing his effusions upon the shrinking object of his precocious affections', availing himself of 'the shelter of a church to cloak his insidious advances', and being an 'unmanly dallier in a sentiment which the healthy mind of boyhood rejects as premature'.[14] He is an expert in the kind of question which, if not strictly rhetorical, certainly indicates what response is expected without actually needing any reply. At the station he demands of the boys, 'Come back braced in body and mind by your vacation, eh?'

Indeed on occasions when a reply is properly expected, the question is promptly followed by another where no response is needed:

> 'And why did you place pudding in the envelope?' inquired the Doctor in his deepest tone . . .
> 'Shall I tell you why you did it, sir?' thundered the Doctor.[15]

The purpose of the Doctor's speeches seems to be to awaken guilt, sometimes in a particular offender first, but almost always eventually in the whole school. Coker or Coggs or Paul himself may be picked out as a hideous example and the other boys encouraged to condemn the malefactor: 'Let your companions regard you with the contempt and abhorrence you so richly merit!' or 'See him as he cowers there before your gaze, in all the bared hideousness of his moral depravity.'[16]

What is being mocked by Anstey – and, indeed, often by the Doctor himself – is the unreal image of an omnipotent figure with unquestioned power who suppresses any of the softer human qualities. In examining the twenty novels, what is surprising is that so many unattractive or ludicrous characteristics congealed in the stock impression of a headmaster. There is an almost fawning emotional loading in the way that some novelists portray these men: 'reverenced . . . before all living men' (1912). It may be doubted whether such a view of the great headmaster as undisputed monarch was good either for the schools or for the men who held the office. Dubious notions of the qualities required for a headmaster lived hazily but dangerously for years in the minds of those who were responsible for appointing men to that position. The relationship between actuality and fiction is always difficult to establish but one author who had himself been both a teacher and a head wrote in the nineties:[17]

> At the present day there is some reason to think an English headmaster the most manifest potentate extant in our civilised world. He is certainly treated by his subjects with an outward observance and etiquette quite royal; and no European monarch retains such an apparently absolute power of veto, untrammelled by fear of majorities or of dynamite.

Twenty years later, considering the necessary qualifications of the 'Headmaster of Fact', as opposed to fiction, Ian Hay wrote at one point[18] in terms that suggested that in this respect fact and fiction must have been close together:

> . . . he must be a majestic figurehead . . . The dignity which doth hedge a Headmaster is so tremendous that the dullest and fussiest of the race can hardly fail to be impressive and awe-inspiring to the plastic mind of youth . . . He must also, of course, be a ruler . . .

> Boys idolise him. In his presence they are paralysed with fear, but away from it they glory in his ferocity of mien and strength of arm . . . Such a man is Olympian, having none of the foibles or soft moments of a human being. He dwells apart, in an atmosphere too rarefied for those who intrude into it.

Humanity has disappeared: the office swallows up the man.

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   - 1884 Richard D. Blackmore: *Tommy Upmore* (Sampson Low, London, [1885])
   - 1894 Talbot Baines Reed: *The Master of the Shell* (Boys Own Paper, London, [1913])
   - 1895 James E. C. Welldon: *Gerald Eversley's Friendship* (Smith Elder, London, 1895)
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READING 2

The **ambiguity** of **leadership**

J. Pfeffer

SOURCE

J. Pfeffer, 'The ambiguity of leadership', *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1977, pp. 104–12.

Problems with the concept of leadership are addressed: (a) the ambiguity of its definition and measurement, (b) the issue of whether leadership affects organizational performance, and (c) the process of selecting leaders, which frequently emphasizes organizationally-irrelevant criteria. Leadership is a process of attributing causation to individual social actors. Study of leaders as symbols and of the process of attributing leadership might be productive.

Leadership has for some time been a major topic in social and organizational psychology. Underlying much of this research has been the assumption that leadership is causally related to organizational performance. Through an analysis of leadership styles, behaviors, or characteristics (depending on the theoretical perspective chosen), the argument has been made that more effective leaders can be selected or trained or, alternatively, the situation can be configured to provide for enhanced leader and organizational effectiveness.

Three problems with emphasis on leadership as a concept can be posed: (a) ambiguity in definition and measurement of the concept itself; (b) the question of whether leadership has discernible effects on organizational outcomes; and (c) the selection process in succession to leadership positions, which frequently uses organizationally irrelevant criteria and which has implications for normative theories of leadership. The argument here is that leadership is of interest primarily as a phenomenological construct. Leaders serve as symbols for representing personal causation of social events. How and why are such attributions of personal effects made? Instead of focusing on leadership and its effects, how do people make

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[1] An earlier version of this paper was presented at the conference, Leadership: Where Else Can We Go?, Center for Creative Leadership, Greensboro, North Carolina, June 30 - July 1, 1975.

inferences about and react to phenomena labelled as leadership (5)?

The Ambiguity of the Concept

While there have been many studies of leadership, the dimensions and definition of the concept remain unclear. To treat leadership as a separate concept, it must be distinguished from other social influence phenomena. Hollander and Julian (24) and Bavelas (2) did not draw distinctions between leadership and other processes of social influence. A major point of the Hollander and Julian review was that leadership research might develop more rapidly if more general theories of social influence were incorporated. Calder (5) also argued that there is no unique content to the construct of leadership that is not subsumed under other, more general models of behavior.

Kochan, Schmidt, and DeCotiis (33) attempted to distinguish leadership from related concepts of authority and social power. In leadership, influence rights are voluntarily conferred. Power does not require goal compatability — merely dependence — but leadership implies some congruence between the objectives of the leader and the led. These distinctions depend on the ability to distinguish voluntary from involuntary compliance and to assess goal compatibility. Goal statements may be retrospective inferences from action (46, 53) and problems of distinguishing voluntary from involuntary compliance also exist (32). Apparently there are few meaningful distinctions between leadership and other concepts of social influence. Thus, an understanding of the phenomena subsumed under the rubric of leadership may not require the construct of leadership (5).

While there is some agreement that leadership is related to social influence, more disagreement concerns the basic dimensions of leader behavior. Some have argued that there are two tasks to be accomplished in groups — maintenance of the group and performance of some task or activity — and thus leader behavior might be described along these two dimensions (1, 6, 8, 25). The dimensions emerging from the Ohio State leadership studies — consideration and initiating structure — may be seen as similar to the two components of group maintenance and task accomplishment (18).

Other dimensions of leadership behavior have also been proposed (4). Day and Hamblin (10) analyzed leadership in terms of the closeness and punitiveness of the supervision. Several authors have conceptualized leadership behavior in terms of the authority and discretion subordinates are permitted (23, 36, 51). Fiedler (14) analyzed leadership in terms of the least-preferred-co-worker scale (LPC), but the meaning and behavioral attributes of this dimension of leadership behavior remain controversial.

The proliferation of dimensions is partly a function of research strategies frequently employed. Factor analysis on a large number of items describing behavior has frequently been used. This procedure tends to produce as many factors as the analyst decides to find, and permits the development of a large number of possible factor structures. The resultant factors must be named and further imprecision is introduced. Deciding on a summative concept to represent a factor is inevitably a partly subjective process.

Literature assessing the effects of leadership tends to be equivocal. Sales (45) summarized leadership literature employing the authoritarian-democratic typology and concluded that effects on performance were small and inconsistent. Reviewing the literature on consideration and initiating structure dimensions, Korman (34) reported relatively small and inconsistent results, and Kerr and Schriesheim (30) reported more consistent effects of the two dimensions. Better results apparently emerge when moderating factors are taken into account, including subordinate personalities (50), and situational characteristics (23, 51). Kerr, et al. (31) list many moderating effects grouped under the headings of subordinate considerations, supervisor considerations, and task considerations. Even if each set of considerations consisted of only one factor

(which it does not), an attempt to account for the effects of leader behavior would necessitate considering four-way interactions. While social reality is complex and contingent, it seems desirable to attempt to find more parsimonious explanations for the phenomena under study.

The Effects of Leaders

Hall asked a basic question about leadership: is there any evidence on the magnitude of the effects of leadership (17, p. 248)? Surprisingly, he could find little evidence. Given the resources that have been spent studying, selecting, and training leaders, one might expect that the question of whether or not leaders matter would have been addressed earlier (12).

There are at least three reasons why it might be argued that the observed effects of leaders on organizational outcomes would be small. First, those obtaining leadership positions are selected, and perhaps only certain, limited styles of behavior may be chosen. Second, once in the leadership position, the discretion and behavior of the leader are constrained. And third, leaders can typically affect only a few of the variables that may impact organizational performance.

Homogeneity of Leaders

Persons are selected to leadership positions. As a consequence of this selection process, the range of behaviors or characteristics exhibited by leaders is reduced, making it more problematic to empirically discover an effect of leadership. There are many types of constraints on the selection process. The attraction literature suggests that there is a tendency for persons to like those they perceive as similar (3). In critical decisions such as the selections of persons for leadership positions, compatible styles of behavior probably will be chosen.

Selection of persons is also constrained by the internal system of influence in the organization. As Zald (56) noted, succession is a critical decision, affected by political influence and by environmental contingencies faced by the organization. As Thompson (49) noted, leaders may be selected for their capacity to deal with various organizational contingencies. In a study of characteristics of hospital administrators, Pfeffer and Salancik (42) found a relationship between the hospital's context and the characteristics and tenure of the administrators. To the extent that the contingencies and power distribution within the organization remain stable, the abilities and behaviors of those selected into leadership positions will also remain stable.

Finally, the selection of persons to leadership positions is affected by a self-selection process. Organizations and roles have images, providing information about their character. Persons are likely to select themselves into organizations and roles based upon their preferences for the dimensions of the organizational and role characteristics as perceived through these images. The self-selection of persons would tend to work along with organizational selection to limit the range of abilities and behaviors in a given organizational role.

Such selection processes would tend to increase homogeneity more within a single organization than across organizations. Yet many studies of leadership effect at the work group level have compared groups within a single organization. If there comes to be a widely shared, socially constructed definition of leadership behaviors or characteristics which guides the selection process, then leadership activity may come to be defined similarly in various organizations, leading to the selection of only those who match the constructed image of a leader.

Constraints on Leader Behavior

Analyses of leadership have frequently presumed that leadership style or leader behavior was an independent variable that could be selected or trained at will to conform to what research would find to be optimal. Even theorists who took a more contingent view of appropriate leadership behavior generally assumed that with proper training, appropriate behavior could be produced (51). Fiedler (13), noting how hard it

was to change behavior, suggested changing the situational characteristics rather than the person, but this was an unusual suggestion in the context of prevailing literature which suggested that leadership style was something to be strategically selected according to the variables of the particular leadership theory.

But the leader is embedded in a social system, which constrains behavior. The leader has a role set (27), in which members have expectations for appropriate behavior and persons make efforts to modify the leader's behavior. Pressures to conform to the expectations of peers, subordinates, and superiors are all relevant in determining actual behavior.

Leaders, even in high-level positions, have unilateral control over fewer resources and fewer policies than might be expected. Investment decisions may require approval of others, while hiring and promotion decisions may be accomplished by committees. Leader behavior is constrained by both the demands of others in the role set and by organizationally prescribed limitations on the sphere of activity and influence.

External Factors

Many factors that may affect organizational performance are outside a leader's control, even if he or she were to have complete discretion over major areas of organizational decisions. For example, consider the executive in a construction firm. Costs are largely determined by operation of commodities and labor markets; and demand is largely affected by interest rates, availability of mortgage money, and economic conditions which are affected by governmental policies over which the executive has little control. School superintendents have little control over birth rates and community economic development, both of which profoundly affect school system budgets. While the leader may react to contingencies as they arise, or may be a better or worse forecaster, in accounting for variation in organizational outcomes, he or she may account for relatively little compared to external factors.

Second, the leader's success or failure may be partly due to circumstances unique to the organization but still outside his or her control. Leader positions in organizations vary in terms of the strength and position of the organization. The choice of a new executive does not fundamentally alter a market and financial position that has developed over years and affects the leader's ability to make strategic changes and the likelihood that the organization will do well or poorly. Organizations have relatively enduring strengths and weaknesses. The choice of a particular leader for a particular position has limited impact on these capabilities.

Empirical Evidence

Two studies have assessed the effects of leadership changes in major positions in organizations. Lieberson and O'Connor (35) examined 167 business firms in 13 industries over a 20 year period, allocating variance in sales, profits, and profit margins to one of four sources: year (general economic conditions), industry, company effects, and effects of changes in the top executive position. They concluded that compared to other factors, administration had a limited effect on organizational outcomes.

Using a similar analytical procedure, Salancik and Pfeffer (44) examined the effects of mayors on city budgets for 30 U.S. cities. Data on expenditures by budget category were collected for 1951-1968. Variance in amount and proportion of expenditures was apportioned to the year, the city, or the mayor. The mayoral effect was relatively small, with the city accounting for most of the variance, although the mayor effect was larger for expenditure categories that were not as directly connected to important interest groups. Salancik and Pfeffer argued that the effects of the mayor were limited both by absence of power to control many of the expenditures and tax sources, and by construction of policies in response to demands from interests in the environment.

If leadership is defined as a strictly interpersonal phenomenon, the relevance of these two studies for the issue of leadership effects be-

comes problematic. But such a conceptualization seems unduly restrictive, and is certainly inconsistent with Selznick's (47) conceptualization of leadership as strategic management and decision making. If one cannot observe differences when leaders change, then what does it matter who occupies the positions or how they behave?

Pfeffer and Salancik (41) investigated the extent to which behaviors selected by first-line supervisors were constrained by expectations of others in their role set. Variance in task and social behaviors could be accounted for by role-set expectations, with adherence to various demands made by role-set participants a function of similarity and relative power. Lowin and Craig (37) experimentally demonstrated that leader behavior was determined by the subordinate's own behavior. Both studies illustrate that leader behaviors are responses to the demands of the social context.

The effect of leadership may vary depending upon level in the organizational hierarchy, while the appropriate activities and behaviors may also vary with organizational level (26, 40). For the most part, empirical studies of leadership have dealt with first line supervisors or leaders with relatively low organizational status (17). If leadership has any impact, it should be more evident at higher organizational levels or where there is more discretion in decisions and activities.

The Process of Selecting Leaders

Along with the suggestion that leadership may not account for much variance in organizational outcomes, it can be argued that merit or ability may not account for much variation in hiring and advancement of organizational personnel. These two ideas are related. If competence is hard to judge, or if leadership competence does not greatly affect organizational outcomes, then other, person-dependent criteria may be sufficient. Effective leadership styles may not predict career success when other variables such as social background are controlled.

Belief in the importance of leadership is frequently accompanied by belief that persons occupying leadership positions are selected and trained according to how well they can enhance the organization's performance. Belief in a leadership effect leads to development of a set of activities oriented toward enhancing leadership effectiveness. Simultaneously, persons managing their own careers are likely to place emphasis on activities and developing behaviors that will enhance their own leadership skills, assuming that such a strategy will facilitate advancement.

Research on the bases for hiring and promotion has been concentrated in examination of academic positions (e.g., 7, 19, 20). This is possibly the result of availability of relatively precise and unambiguous measures of performance, such as number of publications or citations. Evidence on criteria used in selecting and advancing personnel in industry is more indirect.

Studies have attempted to predict either the compensation or the attainment of general management positions of MBA students, using personality and other background information (21, 22, 54). There is some evidence that managerial success can be predicted by indicators of ability and motivation such as test scores and grades, but the amount of variance explained is typically quite small.

A second line of research has investigated characteristics and backgrounds of persons attaining leadership positions in major organizations in society. Domhoff (11), Mills (38), and Warner and Abbeglin (52) found a strong preponderance of persons with upper-class backgrounds occupying leadership positions. The implication of these findings is that studies of graduate success, including the success of MBA's, would explain more variance if the family background of the person were included.

A third line of inquiry uses a tracking model. The dynamic model developed is one in which access to elite universities is affected by social status (28) and, in turn, social status and attendance at elite universities affect later career outcomes (9, 43, 48, 55).

Unless one is willing to make the argument

that attendance at elite universities or coming from an upper class background is perfectly correlated with merit, the evidence suggests that succession to leadership positions is not strictly based on meritocratic criteria. Such a conclusion is consistent with the inability of studies attempting to predict the success of MBA graduates to account for much variance, even when a variety of personality and ability factors are used.

Beliefs about the bases for social mobility are important for social stability. As long as persons believe that positions are allocated on meritocratic grounds, they are more likely to be satisfied with the social order and with their position in it. This satisfaction derives from the belief that occupational position results from application of fair and reasonable criteria, and that the opportunity exists for mobility if the person improves skills and performance.

If succession to leadership positions is determined by person-based criteria such as social origins or social connections (16), then efforts to enhance managerial effectiveness with the expectation that this will lead to career success divert attention from the processes of stratification actually operating within organizations. Leadership literature has been implicitly aimed at two audiences. Organizations were told how to become more effective, and persons were told what behaviors to acquire in order to become effective, and hence, advance in their careers. The possibility that neither organizational outcomes nor career success are related to leadership behaviors leaves leadership research facing issues of relevance and importance.

The Attribution of Leadership

Kelley conceptualized the layman as:

> an applied scientist, that is, as a person concerned about applying his knowledge of causal relationships in order to *exercise control* of his world (29, p. 2).

Reviewing a series of studies dealing with the attributional process, he concluded that persons were not only interested in understanding their world correctly, but also in controlling it.

> The view here proposed is that attribution processes are to be understood not only as a means of providing the individual with a veridical view of his world, but as a means of encouraging and maintaining his effective exercise of control in that world (29, p. 22).

Controllable factors will have high salience as candidates for causal explanation, while a bias toward the more important causes may shift the attributional emphasis toward causes that are not controllable (29, p. 23). The study of attribution is a study of naive psychology — an examination of how persons make sense out of the events taking place around them.

If Kelley is correct that individuals will tend to develop attributions that give them a feeling of control, then emphasis on leadership may derive partially from a desire to believe in the effectiveness and importance of individual action, since individual action is more controllable than contextual variables. Lieberson and O'Connor (35) made essentially the same point in introducing their paper on the effects of top management changes on organizational performance. Given the desire for control and a feeling of personal effectiveness, organizational outcomes are more likely to be attributed to individual actions, regardless of their actual causes.

Leadership is attributed by observers. Social action has meaning only through a phenomenological process (46). The identification of certain organizational roles as leadership positions guides the construction of meaning in the direction of attributing effects to the actions of those positions. While Bavelas (2) argued that the functions of leadership, such as task accomplishment and group maintenance, are shared throughout the group, this fact provides no simple and potentially controllable focus for attributing causality. Rather, the identification of leadership positions provides a simpler and more readily changeable model of reality. When causality is lodged in one or a few persons rather than being a function of a complex set of interactions among all group members, changes can be made by replacing or influencing the occupant of the leadership position. Causes of organiza-

tional actions are readily identified in this simple causal structure.

Even if, empirically, leadership has little effect, and even if succession to leadership positions is not predicated on ability or performance, the belief in leadership effects and meritocratic succession provides a simple causal framework and a justification for the structure of the social collectivity. More importantly, the beliefs interpret social actions in terms that indicate potential for effective individual intervention or control. The personification of social causality serves too many uses to be easily overcome. Whether or not leader behavior actually influences performance or effectiveness, it is important because people believe it does.

One consequence of the attribution of causality to leaders and leadership is that leaders come to be symbols. Mintzberg (39), in his discussion of the roles of managers, wrote of the symbolic role, but more in terms of attendance at formal events and formally representing the organization. The symbolic role of leadership is more important than implied in such a description. The leader as a symbol provides a target for action when difficulties occur, serving as a scapegoat when things go wrong. Gamson and Scotch (15) noted that in baseball, the firing of the manager served a scapegoating purpose. One cannot fire the whole team, yet when performance is poor, something must be done. The firing of the manager conveys to the world and to the actors involved that success is the result of personal actions, and that steps can and will be taken to enhance organizational performance.

The attribution of causality to leadership may be reinforced by organizational actions, such as the inauguration process, the choice process, and providing the leader with symbols and ceremony. If leaders are chosen by using a random number table, persons are less likely to believe in their effects than if there is an elaborate search or selection process followed by an elaborate ceremony signifying the changing of control, and if the leader then has a variety of perquisites and symbols that distinguish him or her from the rest of the organization. Construction of the importance of leadership in a given social context is the outcome of various social processes, which can be empirically examined.

Since belief in the leadership effect provides a feeling of personal control, one might argue that efforts to increase the attribution of causality to leaders would occur more when it is more necessary and more problematic to attribute causality to controllable factors. Such an argument would lead to the hypothesis that the more the *context* actually effects organizational outcomes, the *more efforts* will be made to ensure attribution to *leadership*. When leaders really do have effects, it is less necessary to engage in rituals indicating their effects. Such rituals are more likely when there is uncertainty and unpredictability associated with the organization's operations. This results both from the desire to feel control in uncertain situations and from the fact that in ambiguous contexts, it is easier to attribute consequences to leadership without facing possible disconfirmation.

The leader is, in part, an actor. Through statements and actions, the leader attempts to reinforce the operation of an attribution process which tends to vest causality in that position in the social structure. Successful leaders, as perceived by members of the social system, are those who can separate themselves from organizational failures and associate themselves with organizational successes. Since the meaning of action is socially constructed, this involves manipulation of symbols to reinforce the desired process of attribution. For instance, if a manager knows that business in his or her division is about to improve because of the economic cycle, the leader may, nevertheless, write recommendations and undertake actions and changes that are highly visible and that will tend to identify his or her behavior closely with the division. A manager who perceives impending failure will attempt to associate the division and its policies and decisions with others, particularly persons in higher organizational positions, and to disassociate himself or herself from the division's

performance, occasionally even transferring or moving to another organization.

Conclusion

The theme of this article has been that analysis of leadership and leadership processes must be contingent on the intent of the researcher. If the interest is in understanding the causality of social phenomena as reliably and accurately as possible, then the concept of leadership may be a poor place to begin. The issue of the effects of leadership is open to question. But examination of situational variables that accompany more or less leadership effect is a worthwhile task.

The more phenomenological analysis of leadership directs attention to the process by which social causality is attributed, and focuses on the distinction between causality as perceived by group members and causality as assessed by an outside observer. Leadership is associated with a set of myths reinforcing a social construction of meaning which legitimates leadership role occupants, provides belief in potential mobility for those not in leadership roles, and attributes social causality to leadership roles, thereby providing a belief in the effectiveness of individual control. In analyzing leadership, this mythology and the process by which such mythology is created and supported should be separated from analysis of leadership as a social influence process, operating within constraints.

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READING 3

Leadership: The management of meaning

L. Smircich & G. Morgan

SOURCE

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The concept of leadership permeates and structures the theory and practice of organizations and hence the way we shape and understand the nature of organized action, and its possibilities. In fact, the concept and practice of leadership, and variant forms of direction and control, are so powerfully ingrained into popular thought that the absence of leadership is often seen as an absence of organization. Many organizations are paralyzed by situations in which people appeal for direction, feeling immobolized and disorganized by the sense that they are not being led. Yet other organizations are plagued by the opposite situation characterized in organizational vernacular as one of "all chiefs, no Indians"—the situation where the majority aspire to lead and few to follow. Thus, successful acts of organization are often seen to rest in the synchrony between the initiation of action and the appeal for direction; between the actions of leaders and the receptivity and responsiveness of followers.

In this paper we focus on understanding the phenomenon of leadership, not merely to improve the practice of leadership, but as a means for understanding the phenomenon of organization. For, in leading, managers enact a particular form of social reality with far-reaching, but often poorly understood and appreciated, consequences. We engage in our analysis to reveal how concepts and ideas that dominate management theory and ideology shape managerial practice and the reality of organization. Our approach is to analyze leadership as a

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distinctive kind of social practice, present a case study of leadership in an organizational context, and analyze its consequences for understanding the basic nature of modern corporate life.

THE PHENOMENON OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership is realized in the process whereby one or more individuals succeeds in attempting to frame and define the reality of others. Indeed, leadership situations may be conceived as those in which there exists an *obligation* or a perceived *right* on the part of certain individuals to define the reality of others.

This process is most evident in unstructured group situations where leadership emerges in a natural and spontaneous manner. After periods of interaction, unstructured leaderless groups typically evolve common modes of interpretation and shared understandings of experience that allow them to develop into a social organization (Bennis & Shepard, 1965). Individuals in groups that evolve this way attribute leadership to those members who structure experience in meaningful ways. Certain individuals, as a result of personal inclination or the emergent expectations of others, find themselves adopting or being obliged to take a leadership role by virtue of the part they play in the definition of the situation. They emerge as leaders because of their role in framing experience in a way that provides a viable basis for action, e.g., by mobilizing meaning, articulating and defining what has previously remained implicit or unsaid, by inventing images and meanings that provide a focus for new attention, and by consolidating, confronting, or changing prevailing wisdom (Peters, 1978; Pondy, 1976). Through these diverse means, individual actions can frame and change situations, and in so doing enact a system of shared meaning that provides a basis for organized action. The leader exists as a formal leader only when he or she achieves a situation in which an obligation, expectation, or right to frame experience is presumed, or offered and accepted by others.

Leadership, like other social phenomena, is socially constructed through interaction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), emerging as a result of the constructions and actions of both leaders and led. It involves a complicity or process of negotiation through which certain individuals, implicitly or explicitly, surrender their power to define the nature of their experience to others. Indeed, leadership depends on the existence of individuals willing, as a result of inclination or pressure, to surrender, at least in part, the powers to shape and define their own reality. If a group situation embodies competing definitions of reality, strongly held, no clear pattern of leadership evolves. Often, such situations are characterized by struggles among those who aspire to define the situation. Such groups remain loosely coupled networks of interaction, with members often feeling that they are "disorganized" because they do not share a common way of making sense of their experience.

Leadership lies in large part in generating a point of reference, against which a feeling of organization and direction can emerge. While in certain circumstances the leader's image of reality may be hegemonic, as in the case of charismatic or totalitarian leaders who mesmerize their followers, this is by no means always the case. For the phenomenon of leadership in being interactive is by nature dialecti-

cal. It is shaped through the interaction of at least two points of reference, i.e., of leaders and of led.

This dialectic is often the source of powerful internal tensions within leadership situations. These manifest themselves in the conflicting definitions of those who aspire to define reality and in the fact that while the leader of a group may forge a unified pattern of meaning, that very same pattern often provides a point of reference for the negation of leadership (Sennett, 1980). While individuals may look to a leader to frame and concretize their reality, they may also react against, reject, or change the reality thus defined. While leadership often emerges as a result of expectations projected on the emergent leader by the led, the surrender of power involved provides the basis for negation of the situation thus created. Much of the tension in leadership situations stems from this source. Although leaders draw their power from their ability to define the reality of others, their inability to control completely provides seeds of disorganization in the organization of meaning they provide.

The emergence of leadership in unstructured situations thus points toward at least four important aspects of leadership as a phenomenon. First, leadership is essentially a social process defined through interaction. Second, leadership involves a process of defining reality in ways that are sensible to the led. Third, leadership involves a dependency relationship in which individuals surrender their powers to interpret and define reality to others.[1] Fourth, the emergence of formal leadership roles represents an additional stage of institutionalization, in which rights and obligations to define the nature of experience and activity are recognized and formalized.

LEADERSHIP IN FORMALIZED SETTINGS

The main distinguishing feature of formal organization is that the way in which experience is to be structured and defined is built into a stock of taken for granted meanings, or "typifications" in use (Schutz, 1967) that underlie the everyday definition and reality of the organization. In particular, a formal organization is premised upon shared meanings that define roles and authority relationships that institutionalize a pattern of leadership. In essence, formal organization truncates the leadership process observed in natural settings, concretizing its characteristics as a mode of social organization into sets of predetermined roles, relationships, and practices, providing a blueprint of how the experience of organizational members is to be structured.

Roles, for example, institutionalize the interactions and definitions that shape the reality of organizational life. Rules, conventions, and work practices present ready-made typifications through which experience is to be made sensible. Authority relationships legitimize the pattern of dependency relations that characterize the process of leadership, specifying who is to define organizational reality, and in what circumstances. Authority relationships institutionalize a hierarchical pattern of interaction in which certain individuals are expected to define the experience of others—to lead, and others to have their experience defined—to follow. So powerful is this process of institutionalized leadership and the expectation that someone has the right and obligation to define reality, that leaders are held to account if they do not lead "effectively." Those expecting to be led, for example, often rational-

ize their own inaction or ineffectiveness by scapegoating through statements such as "she is a poor manager" or "he is messing things up." On the other hand, occupancy of an authority role presents the leader in every situation with an existential dilemma—how to define and structure the element of organizational reality encountered at a given time. Formal organizations are often heavily populated by those who feel obliged to define the reality and experience of others in a way that is consistent with their idea of "being a good leader." To fail in this obligation is to fail in one's organizational role.

In these ways, patterns of formal organization institutionalize aspects of the leadership process within the context of a unified structure that specifies patterns of desired interaction, sense making, and dependency. As in the case of leadership as an emergent process, formal structures of organized action also contain a dialectical tension between the pattern of action and meaning that the structure seeks to establish, and the tendency of individuals to reinterpret, or even react against, the structure thus defined. While submitting to the dominant pattern of meaning, individuals frequently strive to develop patterns of their own, a phenomenon well documented in studies of the so-called "informal organization" (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939).

It is this inherent tension that calls for the development of a mediating form of leadership, bridging the gulf between the requirements of institutionalized structure and the natural inclinations of its human agents. It is this form of leadership that we most often recognize as leadership in informal organizations—the interpersonal process linking structure and the human beings who inhabit this structure. The person that is most easily recognized as an organizational leader is one who rises above and beyond the specification of formal structure to provide members of the organization with a sense that they are organized, even amidst an everyday feeling that at a detailed level everything runs the danger of falling apart.

Similarly, successful corporate leaders who give direction to the organization in a strategic sense frequently do so by providing an image or pattern of thinking in a way that has meaning for those directly involved (Quinn, 1980). This is reflected in part in Selznick's (1957) conception of leadership as involving the embodiment of organizational values and purpose. Strategic leadership, in effect, involves providing a conception and direction for organizational process that goes above and beyond what is embedded in the fabric of organization as a structure, i.e., a reified and somewhat static pattern of meaning.

Formal organization thus embodies at least two distinctive, yet complementary aspects of the phenomenon of leadership: (1) the structure of organization institutionalizes the leadership process into a network of roles, often in an overconcretized and dehumanizing form; (2) mediating or interpersonal leadership—what is most evident as leadership in action, operationalizes the principles of leadership as an emergent process within the context of the former. This is usually as a means of transcending the limitations of the former for containing the dialectical tension that it embodies, and as a means of giving the whole coherence and direction over time. These two aspects of leadership have been well recognized in leadership research (Katz & Kahn, 1966) and are frequently interpreted and studied in

terms of a relationship between "initiating structure" and "consideration" (e.g., Stogdill, 1974).

The phenomenon of leadership in formal organizations has been conceptualized and studied in many ways. Leadership research has sought for an understanding of leadership in terms of the personal traits of leaders (Mann, 1959), in terms of situations in which they lead (Fiedler, 1967), in terms of what they do (Mintzberg, 1973) or some combination thereof. Such approaches to the study of leadership tap into important attributes of what leadership may involve in day to day practice, particularly in terms of action requirements, and identify those practices most likely to work in different situations. Other approaches have viewed leadership as a process of exchange and influence (Barnard, 1938; Jacobs, 1971), and attempts have been made to understand the nature of the interactions and transactions necessary for effective leadership to occur (Bougon, Note 1). In the remainder of this paper, we wish to supplement these views with an approach to studying leadership that focuses on the way detailed interactive situations acquire meaningful form.

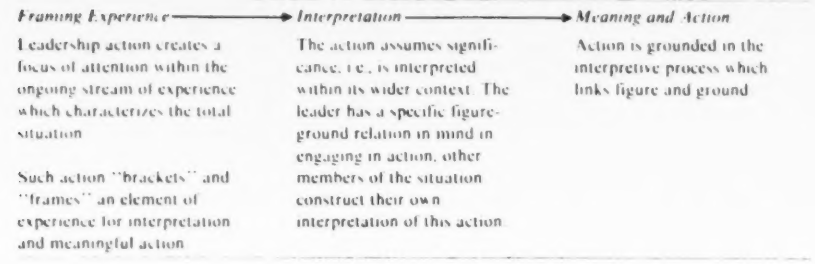
LEADERSHIP AS THE MANAGEMENT OF MEANING

A focus on the way meaning in organized settings is created, sustained, and changed provides a powerful means of understanding the fundamental nature of leadership as a social process. In understanding the way leadership actions attempt to shape and interpret situations to guide organizational members into a common interpretation of reality, we are able to understand how leadership works to create an important foundation for organized activity. This process can be most easily conceptualized in terms of a relationship between figure and ground. Leadership action involves a moving figure—a flow of actions and utterances (i.e., what leaders do) within the context of a moving ground—the actions, utterances, and general flow of experience that constitute the situation being managed. Leadership as a phenomenon is identifiable within its wider context as a form of action that seeks to shape its context.

Leadership works by influencing the relationship between figure and ground, and hence the meaning and definition of the context as a whole. The actions and utterances of leaders guide the attention of those involved in a situation in ways that are consciously or unconsciously designed to shape the meaning of the situation. The actions and utterances draw attention to particular aspects of the overall flow of experience, transforming what may be complex and ambiguous into something more discrete and vested with a specific pattern of meaning. This is what Schutz (1967) has referred to as a "bracketing" of experience, and Goffman (1974) as a "framing" of experience, and Bateson (1972) and Weick (1979) as the "punctuation of contexts." The actions and utterances of leaders frame and shape the context of action in such a way that the members of that context are able to use the meaning thus created as a point of reference for their own action and understanding of the situation.

This process can be represented schematically in terms of the model presented in Figure 1. When leaders act they punctuate contexts in ways that provide a focus for the creation of

Figure 1. Leadership: A Figure-Ground Relationship Which Creates Figure-Ground Relationships


Framing Experience
Leadership action creates a focus of attention within the ongoing stream of experience which characterizes the total situation
Such action "brackets" and "frames" an element of experience for interpretation and meaningful action
Interpretation
The action assumes significance, i.e., is interpreted within its wider context. The leader has a specific figure-ground relation in mind in engaging in action; other members of the situation construct their own interpretation of this action
Meaning and Action
Action is grounded in the interpretive process which links figure and ground

meaning. Their action isolates an element of experience, which can be interpreted in terms of the context in which it is set. Indeed, its meaning is embedded in its relationship with its context. Consider, for example, the simple situation in which someone in a leadership role loses his or her temper over the failure of an employee to complete a job on time. For the leader this action embodies a meaning that links the event to context in a significant way, e.g., "This employee has been asking for a reprimand for a long time"; "This was an important job"; "This office is falling apart." For the employees in the office, the event may be interpreted in similar terms, or a range of different constructions placed upon the situation, e.g., "Don't worry about it, he always loses his temper from time to time"; "She's been under pressure lately because of problems at home."

The leader's action may generate a variety of interpretations that set the basis for meaningful action. It may serve to redefine the context into a situation where the meeting of deadlines assumes greater significance, or merely serves as a brief interruption in daily routine, soon forgotten. As discussed earlier, organized situations are often characterized by complex patterns of meaning, based on rival interpretations of the situation. Different members may make sense of situations with the aid of different interpretive schemes, establishing "counter-realities," a source of tension in the group situation that may set the basis for change of an innovative or disintegrative kind. These counter-realities underwrite much of the political activities within organizations, typified by the leader's loyal lieutenants—the "yes men" accepting and reinforcing the leader's definition of the situation and the "rebels" or "out" groups forging and sustaining alternative views.

Effective leadership depends upon the extent to which the leader's definition of the situation, e.g., "People in this office are not working hard enough," serves as a basis for action by others. It is in this sense that effective leadership rests heavily on the framing of the experience of others, so that action can be guided by common conceptions as to what should occur. The key challenge for a leader is to manage meaning in such a way that individuals orient themselves to the achievement of desirable ends. In this endeavor the use of language, ritual, drama, stories, myths, and symbolic construction of all kinds may play an important role (Pfeffer, 1981; Pondy,

Frost, Morgan & Dandridge, 1982; Smircich, 1982). They constitute important tools in the management of meaning. Through words and images, symbolic actions and gestures, leaders can structure attention and evoke patterns of meaning that give them considerable control over the situation being managed. These tools can be used to forge particular kinds of figure-ground relations that serve to create appropriate modes of organized action. Leadership rests as much in these symbolic modes of action as in those instrumental modes of management, direction, and control that define the substance of the leader's formal organizational role.

A CASE STUDY IN THE MANAGEMENT OF MEANING

In order to illustrate the way leadership involves the management of meaning, we present here a case study drawn from an ethnographic study of the executive staff of an insurance company. The company was a division of a larger corporation (10,000 employees), was 11 years old, and employed 200 people. The case focuses on the way the president of the insurance company, Mr. Hall, sought to structure the experience of staff members by creating a particular figure-ground relationship—"Operation June 30th" (0J30). 0J30 emerged as a prominent organizational event during the fieldwork and provided a focus for studying the process of leadership in action, in this instance, one of limited success.

Methodology

The research was conducted by one of the authors during the summer of 1979. An agreement was reached whereby the researcher was invited to spend six weeks in the insurance company as an observer of the executive staff. The purpose of the research was to learn about the ways of life within the 10-member top management group, to uncover the structures of meaning in use in the setting, and to synthesize an image of the group's reality.

The specific techniques used to gather data in the setting, consistent with the ethnographic tradition (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Schatzman & Strauss, 1973; Smircich, Note 2), were oriented toward understanding the realms of intersubjective meaning which gave that organization a semblance of unity and character to its membership.

In this study the researcher maintained the work hours of the organization. Early on she met individually with each of the staff members and explained the project as an attempt to learn about their organization. Each day's activity consisted of observing the management staff in a variety of situations: staff meetings, planning sessions, interactions with their subordinates, on coffee breaks, and in casual conversation. The guiding principle in this endeavor was to obtain a multisided view of the situation in order to build a holistic image of the group's understanding of itself. Toward the end of the stay in the company, tape recorded conversations/interviews were held with all staff members, including the president. The raw data from this study consist of daily field notes, documents, tapes of conversations, and the researcher's experience of the situation.

During the field work, the organization was in the midst of 0J30, and it was a prominent topic of discussion by the staff and in the researcher's con-

versations with the staff. For the purposes of this paper, the data were culled for all references to the OJ30 program so that an account of the situation from multiple viewpoints could be presented.

Ideally, the research would have proceeded in a way that allowed the researcher to reflect back to the group the many-sided image of the meaning system in use that had emerged. As the case study shows, the president's unwillingness to proceed with this aspect of the research was representative of the way of life he strived to maintain in the organization and in that sense provides a form of validation for some of the data presented here.

The background to Operation June 30th

"Operation June 30th" was instigated by Mr. Hall, the president, in direct response to complaints by the district sales managers that the agents in the field were not getting adequate service from the home office. Insurance claims, applications, endorsements, and renewals were not being handled promptly. The agents were getting complaints from their customers about long delays; consequently, they submitted second and third work requests that only served to make the volume of paperwork greater. The slowdown in processing of paperwork also meant that the agents' commission checks were slow in going out so that they did not receive their commissions in the month of sale.

After hearing the frustration of the Sales Department, Hall considered what might be done.[2] He conferred with the vice-president of administrative operations and the vice-president of claims and asked them if they thought it would be possible to have processing operations current by June 30th, the end of the fiscal year. President Hall then wrote an announcement (Figure 2), showed it to the vice-presidents for their comments and approval, and released it to the district sales managers.

With the initiation of OJ30, makeshift posters proclaiming "Operation June 30th Goals Week of June ____" were attached to file cabinets in the operations area. To bring the workflow up to date, overtime work (evenings and Saturdays) was expected, and other departments were encouraged to help out wherever possible by

Figure 2. Operation June 30

WHAT	A special program designed to bring all insurance processing activities up to date by June 30, 1979.
WHY	The present work backlog is having an adverse impact on total insurance operations.
HOW	1. All departments will make a concerted effort to eliminate all backlogs. The goal is to have work conditions current in all departments by June 30. 2. All insurance home office employees who have the time will be expected to "volunteer" to assist other departments by performing certain assigned processing tasks until June 30. Procedures relative to this will be developed.
TIMING	Operation June 30 will commence on Monday, May 14 and will terminate on Saturday, June 30.
PRIORITY	This program has the highest priority. Nothing else in insurance is of more importance.
REPORTS	Each staff member will report in writing weekly to Mr. Hall on the status of work conditions in his or her department.

loaning people during the week or by urging their people to come in on the weekends. Each week at the staff meeting a status report was made by the vice-president of operations on the number of files that had been processed through each of the operating units.

At Hall's staff meeting of July 2nd, the vice-president of operations declared OJ30 a "success." During that meeting an energetic discussion about how to express gratitude to the employees took place. The company ultimately provided a free lunch for the employees to thank them for their efforts, and a written statement of progress was prepared for the district sales managers. But privately some staff members expressed quite differing views about what had occurred. In fact some held the opinion that the whole affair was a failure because it did not address the real problems in the company.

OJ30 was a focus for the construction of different interpretations of reality. While the president and some of his staff constructed the situation in one way, other members forged their own view of the situation through the interplay of quite a different figure-ground relationship. It is instructive to examine the way the dynamics of the leadership process in this situation are reflected in the constructions of those involved.

Operation June 30: An attempt to manage meaning

How OJ30 structured meaning is reflected in the way it was created, named, and managed as a significant event within day to day work life. OJ30 was presented to staff members in a way that attempted to orient attention away from the current situation to a desired future state. No attempt was made to analyze or interpret the significance of the backlog of work; the intent was just to eliminate it. This is reflected in the president's choice of language in the creation and naming of Operation June 30th. In the announcement the backlog was labelled "adverse," but not otherwise interpreted. The backlog is defined as the problem, and OJ30 was conceived as a military style operation to overcome it, implying a gathering of troops for an all-out assault. The name chosen by the president was not oriented to an explanation of the present conditions (e.g., "Operation Backlog" or "Operation Clean Sweep") but instead served to focus attention on a desired future state. Moreover, the inclusion of a date gave the program the status of a concrete event with an end point.

In this effort the president chose to emphasize certain temporal, perceptual ("special program," "highest priority") and interpersonal horizons ("concerted effort," "volunteer") to serve as context. By choosing a future time horizon, a perceptual space of tightness/closeness to respond to urgency, and an interpersonal horizon of smoothness and nonconflict, the president implied that the message of Operation June 30th was one of a forward focus. He placed no blame for current conditions and viewed the organization as a team, each member having an important role. When the vice-president of operations declared Operation June 30th a success, Hall saw the free lunch as an appropriate way to draw the event to a close.

This same pattern of emphasis was reflected in other examples of the president's talk, as in this instance of elaborating his management philosophy:

> We all need each other. You really don't go very far unless everybody's got their shoulder to the wheel. . . . You can't overdo this (teamwork) to the point where you threaten to suppress some spirited debate in an organization. . . . You could have people not speaking their minds just because they feel they might undermine the teamwork philosophy, or the image you're trying to build. That would be wrong, because you've got to have some confrontation between people as you go along, as long as it doesn't get personal. This is what I keep saying to the staff. You can't get personal about these things, because once you get personal and take on a person individually and affect your relationship, then you've injected a little poison into the outfit. But as long as you're sincere and you're talking about the issues instead of personalities, then debate should be encouraged if you're going to make the best decisions . . . and the main thing is just to keep the personalities out of it.

The president does not speak of his role in terms of charting the direction of the organization but instead focuses his efforts at establishing and maintaining internal harmony. His approach toward OJ30 was quite consistent with this focus.

The staff members' reactions

Although the president sought to shape a reality of cooperation and urgency in the face of adverse conditions, it is apparent from the talk of executive staff that he did not succeed in generating these feelings among these staff members. Indeed, the reality for them was basically one of disharmony, disaffection, and noninvolvement. This is evidenced by remarks of the vice-president of operations, whose department was the main focus of Operation June 30th.

> Tom (the president) talks about "sprinting to the finish," "we all have to put our shoulder to the wheel," but you know nobody responds. . . . To tell you the truth, I'm pretty fed up, I'm agitated by working every Saturday that I've been working, and to see very few other people who are helping or anything. . . ."

The vice-president of operations maintained a chart to keep track of who had been helping during Operation June 30th and expressed dissatisfaction with what it showed. "See, Director of Personnel, all dashes by his name, he hasn't helped out. . . . We have no team around here."

The president's use of military imagery was noted by the director of personnel but not seen as effective.

> It's (OJ30) probably a good thing in a lot of ways because say somebody attacked our country, we got called into a world war. . . . I kind of thought that when this initially came out it would serve as a common cause, a unification of the different forces we have in the company. It started off in that direction, but it's eased up quite a bit.

There was no urgency about OJ30 for the staff members. "We'll be in the same boat on July 30th," said one executive and he explained why.

> As long as . . . the president or someone else that has some involvement with that department doesn't challenge them, everyone's going to think everything is fine. And it will be, until some agents or some insured . . . begin to ask more questions as to why this isn't being done. I know for a fact that they aren't up-to-date. I could go over there and find errors.

But at the July 2nd staff meeting this same executive did not question the vice-president of operations' description of OJ30 as a success, justifying his own behavior by saying his department was not directly involved and

that it was the president's responsibility to check and ask questions. But he believed the president incapable of doing so because he didn't know what to look for. In his own way, this executive also participated in burying the problems, but he saw that as the only option available to him.

The staff members' interpretations

The executive staff members rejected the meaning that the president sought to attach to the OJ30 program. They made sense of the project not in terms of some desired future state of task performance, but against the background of what they knew and felt about their organization.[3]

They were not a team, but instead a group in which conflict was repressed but close to the surface. Their group enacted a continued pattern of not dealing with problems effectively. The executive staff attributed this pattern to the preferences and style of the president. They considered him "too trusting" and "not wanting to hear if things are bad." Although he espoused that "you have to have some confrontation between people," he and the staff participated in avoiding confrontation.

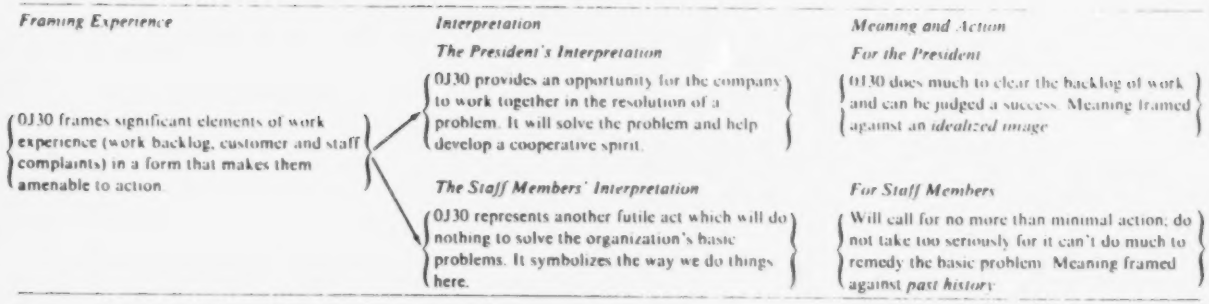
To the executive staff, OJ30 was symbolic of the way of life in their organization. It represented one more instance of the president's continued reluctance to deal fully and directly with problems. He may have labelled OJ30 "highest priority" and attempted to mobilize their energies, but he got little more than business as usual. For the staff did not interpret it as an occasion in which to behave in tight and helpful coordination. They made sense of OJ30, not as an organizational imperative emphasizing interdependence, but as an organizational malaise encouraging an isolationist response.

The executive staff expressed feelings of powerlessness; they saw no way to do things differently. For them it was a choice of resigning or going along with the way it is. Neither alternative seemed attractive. They shared a common understanding of the expected mode of behavior, basically a passive posture and a shared perception of the president's preferences. Paradoxically, the president's attempt to manage the meaning of OJ30 ("everybody get their shoulder to the wheel") was actually sabotaged by his staff's adherence to what they saw as the "real" organizational value—the value which Hall, to them, embodied: If you do nothing, no harm will come to you.

The competing interpretations of reality

Figure 3 presents a summary of the competing interpretive schemes through which the president and his executive staff made sense of the OJ30 project. For the president, OJ30 sought to define the situation in a way that created a high priority, future-oriented program addressed to the question, "What do we do now?" His interpretation of the final "success" of the program was framed against the relative success of OJ30 in getting rid of the backlog of work. For the staff, OJ30 was framed against an understanding of why they were "in a mess" and had a very different significance. It was just another sign of the inadequate way the fragmented organization was being run. They saw it as the act of a manager who was afraid to confront the real issues, who insisted on seeing the organization as a team, whereas the reality was that of a poorly managed group characterized by narrow self-interest, and noncooperation at anything but a surface level. OJ30 for

Figure 3. Competing Interpretations of 0J30


Framing Experience
Interpretation
The President's Interpretation
Meaning and Action
For the President
0J30 frames significant elements of work experience (work backlog, customer and staff complaints) in a form that makes them amenable to action.
0J30 provides an opportunity for the company to work together in the resolution of a problem. It will solve the problem and help develop a cooperative spirit.
0J30 does much to clear the backlog of work and can be judged a success. Meaning framed against an idealized image.
The Staff Members' Interpretation
For Staff Members
0J30 represents another futile act which will do nothing to solve the organization's basic problems. It symbolizes the way we do things here.
Will call for no more than minimal action; do not take too seriously for it can't do much to remedy the basic problem. Meaning framed against past history.

them was symbolic of the status quo, and hence they were not effectively mobilized into action.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF CONTEMPORARY ORGANIZATION

The OJ30 case illustrates a leadership action concerned with managing the meaning of a particular situation. As an action designed to catch up on a work-flow problem, OJ30 was partially successful, for it did generate extra work from many staff who felt obliged to do something in conformity with the president's wishes. As an action designed to define the meaning of a situation, it was for the most part a failure, for it was interpreted by the executive staff in a manner that ran counter to what the president desired. Indeed the president's most powerful impact on the pattern of meaning within the organization was of a negative kind—his inaction and avoidance of problems creating an atmosphere of drifting and inaction.

At the surface our analysis may lead to the conclusion that Hall was a weak and ineffective leader. But to quickly judge him so is to risk losing sight of the larger dynamics that are at work in this leadership situation. Although Hall's view of organizational reality is not shared by the executive staff, he exerted a major impact on the broader definition of the situation. His style and presence provided the most powerful point of reference for action. The executive staff in this case adopts a passive nonconfronting posture, living a somewhat uncomfortable organizational reality defined and symbolized by the president. Hall provides evidence of how even weak leadership, by its fundamental nature, involves the definitions of situations.

Leaders symbolize the organized situation in which they lead. Their actions and utterances project and shape imagery in the minds of the led, which is influential one way or another in shaping actions within the setting as a whole. This is not to deny the importance of the voluntary nature of the enactments and sense-making activities initiated by members of the situation being managed. Rather, it is to recognize and emphasize the special and important position accorded to the leader's view of the situation in the frame of reference of others. Leaders, by nature of their leadership role, are provided with a distinctive opportunity to influence the sense making of others. Our case study illustrates the importance of the leader recognizing the nature of his or her influence and managing the meaning of situations in a constructive way. At a minimum this involves that he or she (a) attempt to deal with the equivocality that permeates many interactive situations; (b) attend to the interpretive schemes of those involved, and (c) embody through use of appropriate language, rituals, and other forms of symbolic discourse, the meanings and values conducive to desired modes of organized action. A focus on leadership as the management of meaning encourages us to develop a theory for the practice of leadership in which these three generalizations are accorded a central role.

Our analysis also draws attention to the role of power as a defining feature of the leadership process. With the OJ30 case we see the way the power relations embedded in a leadership role oblige others to take particular note of the sense-making activities emanating from that role. We have

characterized this in terms of a dependency relation between leaders and led, in which the leader's sense-making activities assume priority over the sense-making activities of others.

The existence of leadership depends on and fosters this dependency, for insofar as the leader is expected to define the situation, others are expected to surrender that right. As we have noted, leadership as a phenomenon depends upon the existence of people who are prepared to surrender their ability to define their reality to others. Situations of formal leadership institutionalize this pattern into a system of rights and obligations whereby the leader has the prerogative to define reality, and the led to accept that definition as a frame of reference for orienting their own activity.

Organized action in formal settings constitutes a process of enactment and sense making on the part of those involved, but one shaped in important ways by the power relations embedded in the situation as a whole. Leadership and the organizational forms to which it gives rise enact a reality that expresses a power relationship. An understanding of the power relationship embedded in all enactment processes is thus fundamental for understanding the nature of organization as an enacted social form, for enactments express power relationships.

Thus our analysis of the leadership process tells us much about the nature of organization as a hierarchical phenomenon. Most patterns of formal organization institutionalize the emergent characteristics of leadership into roles, rules, and relations that give tangible and enduring form to relationships between leaders and led. Our analysis of leadership as a social phenomenon based on interaction, sense making, and dependency implies a view of much modern organization in which these factors are seen as defining features. To see leadership as the management of meaning is to see organizations as networks of managed meanings, resulting from those interactive processes through which people have sought to make sense of situations.

This view of leadership and organization provides a framework for reconsidering the way leadership has been treated in organizational research. By viewing leadership as a relationship between traits, roles, and behaviors and the situations in which they are found, or as a transactional process involving the exchange of rewards and influence, most leadership research has focused upon the dynamics and surface features of leadership as a tangible social process. The way leadership as a phenomenon involves the structuring and transformation of reality has with notable exceptions (e.g., Burns, 1978), been ignored, or at best approached tangentially. The focus on the exchange of influence and rewards has rarely penetrated to reveal the way these processes are embedded in, and reflect a deeper structure of power-based meaning and action. Leadership is not simply a process of acting or behaving, or a process of manipulating rewards. It is a process of power-based reality construction and needs to be understood in these terms.

The concept of leadership is a central building block of the conventional wisdom of organization and management. For the most part the idea that good organization embodies effective leadership practice passes unquestioned. Our analysis here leads us to question this wisdom and points to-

ward the unintended consequences that leadership situations often generate.

The most important of these stem from the dependency relations that arise when individuals surrender their power and control over the definition of reality to others. Leaders may create situations in which individuals are crippled by purposelessness and inaction when left to guide efforts on their own account. Leadership may actually work against the development of self-responsibility, self-initiative, and self-control, in a manner that parallels Argyris's (1957) analysis of the way the characteristics of bureaucratic organization block potentialities for full human development. These blocks arise whenever leadership actions divert individuals from the process of defining and taking responsibility for their own action and experience.

Leadership situations may generate a condition of "trained inaction" in the led, a variant form of Veblen's (1904) "trained incapacity," observed by Merton (1968) as a dominant characteristic of the bureaucratic personality. This trained inaction is clearly illustrated in the 0J30 study where the executive staff experienced problems in their work situation as something beyond their control. The situation here emanates from the way a relatively weak leader defines the situation; but it is equally evident in situations of strong, dominating leadership illustrated in a graphic but extreme way in situations such as the tragedy in Jonestown, Guyana.

An awareness of the dependency relationships that characterize leadership situations sensitizes us to potentially undesirable consequences and also points toward ways in which leadership action can be directed for the avoidance of such states through the creation of patterns of meaning construction that facilitate constructive tension and innovation rather than passivity. In this regard our analysis points toward an important focus for both the practice of contemporary organization and for future research—on the processes through which the management of meaning in organized situations can develop in ways that enhance, rather than deny, the ability of individuals to take responsibility for the definition and control of their world.

It is important to investigate forms of organized action that depart from the traditional leadership model. We are persuaded to suggest that the study of nonleadership situations would focus attention on a phenomenon of some importance.

Patterns of organization that replace hierarchical leadership with patterns of more equalized interaction in which each has an obligation to define what is happening, and respond accordingly, changes the very basis of organization. Such arrangements increase the adaptive capacity of organization through what Emery and Trist (1972) have described as a redundancy of functions. These embody a model of human development in line with the ability of human beings to take responsibility for their actions. In situations characterized by hierarchical dependency, those in leadership roles are obliged to interpret and assimilate all that there is to observe and understand about a situation before initiating the action of others. In situations of more equalized power, this obligation and ability is more widely spread. Members of a situation are unable to look to authority relations to solve problems; adaptive capacities have to be developed at the level at which they are needed, increas-

ing the learning and adaptive ability of the whole. Autonomous work groups and leaderless situations of all kinds present concrete opportunities for the study of emergent principles of organization that offer alternatives to the dependency relations that have permeated Western culture as an organizational norm.

The conventional wisdom that organization and leadership are by definition intertwined has structured the way we see and judge alternative modes of organized action. Approaching this subject from a perspective that treats organization as a phenomenon based on the management of meaning, we can begin to see and understand the importance of developing and encouraging alternative means through which organized action can be generated and sustained.

NOTES

1. A minor qualification is appropriate here in that certain charismatic leaders may inspire others to restructure their reality in creative ways. The dependency relation is evident, however, in that the individual takes the charismatic leader as a point of reference in this process.

2. The president of the insurance company had been involved in the day to day management of the company for 18 months. Previously, all nine executive staff members had reported to an executive vice-president so that the president could devote his attention to external relationships. When the executive vice-president died in January 1978, a decision was made not to replace him. Instead, all executive staff members reported directly to the president. The executive staff was a stable group; all had been employed in the company for no less than seven years.

3. The staff members were concerned about the equivocality surrounding the cause of the backlog. In a conversation with the researcher, the director of sales asked himself, "How did the company get into this position?" And replied, "It started two years ago with the decision to microfilm. It ate us up. I could have my head handed to me for this, the president backed it." The sales director expressed the view that the past decision to install microfilming equipment and to microfilm all stored records as well as microfilm all incoming work had been the major factor in the operating department's falling so far behind in the processing of work. The other executives agreed with this interpretation.

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Annotated bibliography

Apple, M.W. *Education and Power*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1982.
An outstanding book which extends and reflects on the arguments presented in Apple's earlier work *Ideology and Curriculum*. The chapters in this volume are essentially concerned with knowledge and curriculum and the ways that these have become commodified. In the last chapter Apple calls for the expansion of democratic practices which he sees as important both substantively and strategically.

Barnard, C.I. *The Function of the Executive*. Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., 1938.
Barnard represents a starting point for many of the conventional organisation and administration theorist. He held the core belief that people are generally uncritical and want a strong leader or company executive to lead them. For a critique of Barnard read Perrow's *Complex Organizations*.

Bates, R.J. 'Morale and motivation: Myth and reality in educational administration'. *Educational Administration Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1983, pp. 26–52.
In this article Bates criticises the conventional psychological approach which has marked the work on morale and motivation in the literature of the human relations movement. He exposes the myths, ideology and reality which underscore the human relations movement. This critique is then applied to contemporary problems in educational administration.

Benson, J.K. 'Organizations: A dialectical view'. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1977, pp. 1–21.
This is the classic paper on dialectics within organisations. Benson attempts to present a way of analysing organisations that is an alternative to the functionalist theories which are based on positivist methodology. In contrast to the predominant static conception of organisations, a dialectical view is concerned with process and transformation as human beings produce their social structures within a social content.

Burrell, G., & Morgan, G. *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis: Elements of the Sociology of Corporate Life*. Heinemann, London, 1979.
An important book which has had a significant effect on the study of organisations. Using the work of Kuhn, Burrell and Morgan put forward a schema of four mutually enclusive paradigms of organisations. Most of the book, however, discusses the functionalist paradigm which receives an excellent critique.

Carey, A. 'The Lysenko syndrome in Western social science'. *Australian Psychologist*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1977, pp. 27-37.
This paper is a biting critique of some of the conventional approaches to leadership. Carey claims that these approaches are essentially propaganda exercises in manipulation. To support his thesis he examines three of the classic studies in leadership.

Fiedler, F.E. *A Theory of Leadership Effectiveness*. McGraw-Hill, New York, 1967.
Fiedler's work on leadership has held a dominant position in studies of organisation and administration. While still holding a pre-eminent position in traditional literature on administration, his work increasingly is coming under criticism. An important critique is included in Perrow's *Complex Organizations*.

Gibb, C.A. *Leadership: Selected Readings*. Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1970.
An important collection of most of the foremost traditional writers on leadership. While many of the views, for example on trait theory, seem to be dated, they still seem to have their comtemporary disciples.

Giddens, A. *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis*. Macmillan, London, 1979.

Giddens, A. *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*. Macmillan, London, 1981.
These are powerful books which have a profound influence in all areas of social science and further develop Giddens's theory of structuration. Through this theory Giddens seeks to resolve the problems inherent in the traditional functionalist view of society and institutions. The problem of structure and agency is resolved through the concept of the duality of structure. Giddens argues that this entails viewing social structures as both the medium and the outcome of social practices.

Greenfield, T.B. Environment as subjective reality. Paper presented to the Symposium, 'School Organisations and their Environments', Montreal, April, 1983.
An excellent paper which criticises traditional organisation theory. Greenfield argues that the traditional approach treats individuals as pawns who can be controlled and manipulated and, as a result, denied individual action. Important in this paper is his outline of an alternative theory and its stress on power.

McCall, M.W. Jr, & Lombardo, M.M. (eds). *Leadership: Where Else Can We Go?*. Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 1978.
This edited volume expresses the sense of frustration which has arisen from traditional approaches to leadership. The writers pose

such questions as: Has the concept of leadership outlived its usefulness? Should it be scrapped? If it was, would it matter?

Perrow, C. *Complex Organizations: A Critical Essay*. 2nd edn. Scott, Forseman, Glenview, Ill., 1979.
Perrow takes a critical look at complex organisations in this book. From the point of view of leadership the most important chapters are Chapter 2, 'Managerial ideologies and the origins of the human relations movement', and Chapter 3, 'The human relations model'. These two chapters are essential reading for students of leadership. Also important is the last chapter which has been added to this edition. It points to future directions.

Pondy, L. R., Frost, P. J., Morgan, G., & Dandridge, T.C. (eds). *Organizational Symbolism*. JAI Press, Greenwich, Conn., 1983.
In this important work the authors aim to examine organisations from a symbolic perspective. They argue that the symbolic perspective has a legitimate and important role in organisational analysis which others might build on and develop.

Salaman, G. *Class and the Corporation*. Fontana, London, 1981.
Salaman argues in this book that any adequate theory of organisations must refer also to a theory of class. He claims that the distribution of rewards, social relations and controls in organisations reflects the class relations of the wider society.

About the author

Peter Watkins had been a teacher in the Victorian Education Department for twenty years before joining Deakin University. He completed an MEd in educational administration at Monash University, studying the power relationships in five technical schools. He then commenced doctoral studies, and completed his PhD at Deakin University in 1982. The thesis examined a Year 11 group's perceptions of work before and after going out on work experience. His main interests are the relationships between school and work; organisational power; workplace democracy; and the development of a critical analysis of organisations.

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